

A HUNDRED POEMS

WILLIAM WATSON

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WILLIAM WATSON

A Hundred Poems

by

Sir William Watson

Selected from his
various volumes

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PREFATORY NOTE

THE only earlier volume of selections from Sir William Watson's poetry is now, like the collected editions that preceded and followed it, out of print, and, like them, it will not be reprinted. It had become less and less representative of his poetical work as a whole, being a selection drawn from only six of his separate books, whereas the present selection has been drawn from seventeen.

His longest poems of the narrative order have as a matter of course been excluded from this volume, being obviously outside its compass. On quite different grounds everything has been banished that could be called political, in the sense now most frequently given to that word. Two short poems arising out of certain events which darkened the 'nineties can hardly be accused of forming an exception to this rule, as they merely express common human feeling, and indeed had their source in something altogether distinct from party creeds and party passions.

The author has added to the main body of the volume a few of his epigrams, quatrains, and kindred pieces, some of them written more than forty years ago, others quite recently. Apart from all question of merit or interest, a reader might very well murmur if things of such extreme brevity had been counted among the Hundred Poems offered him. They have not, however, been so counted, but are additional to that number.

In arranging the contents of this book no attempt has been made at chronological sequence, except in the case of a few short poems here and there, which for reasons

PREFATORY NOTE

perhaps more interesting to the writer than to the reader are grouped in the order in which they seem to have been written.

In everything taken from the latest collected edition of the author's poems the emendations which were a feature of that edition have been followed, except once or twice where he believes that they have been improved upon. The poems selected from his subsequent volumes appear, in at least two instances, with perhaps more than slight revision.

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THE THREE GIVERS

ENGLAND gave me sun and storm,
The food whereon my spirit throve ;
America gave me hand-grasps warm,
And Ireland gave me her I love.

Heirs of unequal wealth they are,
These noble lands, these givers three ;
And it was the poorest one by far,
That gave the richest gift to me.

THE EARTH'S DESIRE

WHEN a sigh as of abdication is wrung from
lordly things
By the rumour of crumbling pride that the
eve of autumn brings ;

When the troubled splendours come, and the green per-
fections go,
Amid flitting of vagabond tempest irresolute to and fro ;

“ Ask, ask thou a boon,” say the Heavens to the wistful
Earth ; but in vain
She asks for the bliss of the Rose, and the pomp of the
Nightingale’s pain.

THE HUSBANDMAN OF HEAVEN

(Lines written near the burial-place of Burns)

POET, whose very dust, here shed,
Is as the quick among the dead,
Where revels thy carousing soul ?
What Hebe fills what mighty bowl,
Mantling with what immortal drink ?

* * * * *

Nay, great and blissful one ! I think
That, taught by Time himself to flee
The taverns of Eternity,
Amid yon constellations thou
Drivest all night the heavenly Plough,
Wooing with song some sky-nymph fair
Who sits in Cassiopeia's Chair,
Or half unravels on her knees
That tangled net, the Pleiades,
Or, at thy over amorous strain
Bridling with wrath she needs must feign,
Flits to a region pale and gray,
Shimmers through nebula away,
But wandering back, with starlike tears
Yields to the Ploughman of the Spheres.

UNINHABITED

BEHOLD a sapless husk, in name a man,
That never shook with laughter at a jest,
Or flashed in anger at a hateful deed,
Or loved a woman, or sinned a headlong sin !
In two score years grown old and moribund,
His lean soul, arid as the childless sands,
Crumbles, and dustily disintegrates,
Dies piecemeal, less lamented than a tree.

It is not the well-warmed, well-peopled house
That soonest falls to wrack. 'Tis the disused
And empty dwelling, that with fireless hearth,
Pictureless walls, and shuttered window panes,
Coldly, untimely mopes into decay.

THE LUTE-PLAYER

HE was a lady great and splendid,
I was a minstrel in her halls.
A warrior like a prince attended
Stayed his steed by the castle walls.

Far had he fared to gaze upon her.
“ O rest thee now, Sir Knight,” she said.
The warrior wooed, the warrior won her ;
In time of snowdrops they were wed.
I made sweet music in his honour,
And longed to strike him dead.

I passed at midnight from her portal,
Throughout the world till death I rove :
Ah, let me make this lute immortal
With rapture of my hate and love !

THE SOVEREIGN POET

HE sits above the clang and dust of Time,
With the world's secret trembling on his lip.
He asks not converse or companionship
In the cold starlight where thou canst not climb.

The undelivered tidings in his breast
Suffer him not to rest.
He sees afar the immemorable throng,
And binds the scattered ages with a song.

The glorious riddle of his rhythmic breath,
His might, his spell, we know not what they be :
We only feel, whate'er he uttereth,
This savours not of death,
This hath a relish of eternity.

STORM IN MID-ATLANTIC

MANY have sung of the terrors of Storm :
I will make me a song of its beauty, its graces
of hue and form :
A song of the loveliness gotten of Power,
Born of Rage in her blackest hour,
When never a wave repeats another,
But each is unlike his own twin brother,
Each is himself from base to crown,
Himself alone as he clammers up,
Himself alone as he crashes down ;—
When the whole sky drinks of the sea's mad cup,
And the ship is thrilled to her quivering core,
But amidst her pitching, amidst her rolling,
Amidst the clangour and boom and roar,
Is a Spirit of Beauty all-controlling !
For here in the thick of the blinding weather
The great waves gather themselves together,
Shake out their creases, compose their folds,
As if each one knew that an eye beholds.
And look ! there rises a shape of wonder,
A moving menace, a mount of gloom,
But the moment ere he breaks asunder
His forehead flames into sudden bloom,
A burning rapture of nameless green,
That never on earth or in heaven was seen,
Never but where the midmost ocean
Greets and embraces the tempest in primal divine emotion.

And down in a vale of the sea, between
Two roaring hills, is a wide smooth space,
Where the foam that blanches the ocean's face
Is woven in likeness of filmiest lace,
Delicate, intricate, fairy-fine,
Wrought by the master of pure design,
Storm, the matchless artist, lord of colour and line.

TO LICINIUS

(Ode of Horace paraphrased)

LICINIUS, wouldest thou wisely steer
'That barque which is thy soul,
Not always trust her without fear
Where deep-sea billows roll ;
Nor, to the sheltered beach too near,
Risk shipwreck on the shoal.

Who sees in fortune's golden mean
All his desires comprised,
Midway the cot and court between
Hath well his life devised ;
For riches, hath not envied been,
Nor, for their lack, despised.

Most rocks the pine that soars afar,
When leaves are tempest-whirled.
Direst the crash when turrets are
In dusty ruin hurled.
The thunder loveth best to scar
The white brows of the world.

'The steadfast mind, that to the end
Is fortune's victor still,
Hath yet a fear, though Fate befriend,
A hope, though all seem ill.
Jove can at will the winter send,
Or call the spring at will.

Full oft the darkest day may be
 Of morrows bright the sire.
His bow not everlastingly
 Apollo bends in ire.
At times the silent Muses he
 Wakes with his dulcet lyre.

When stormy narrows round thee roar,
 Be bold ; naught else avails.
But when thy canvas swells before
 Too proudly prospering gales,
For once be wise with coward's lore,
 And timely reef thy sails.

ODE ON THE DAY OF THE CORONATION OF KING EDWARD VII

I

SIRE, we have looked on many and mighty things
In these eight hundred summers of renown
Since the Gold Dragon of the Wessex Kings
On Hastings field went down ;
And slowly in the ambience of this crown
Have many crowns been gathered, till, to-day,
How many peoples crown thee, who shall say ?
Time, and the ocean, and some fostering star,
In high cabal have made us what we are,
Who stretch one hand to Huron's bearded pines,
And one on Kashmir's snowy shoulder lay,
And round the streaming of whose raiment shines
The iris of the Australasian spray.
For waters have connived at our designs,
And winds have plotted with us—and behold,
Kingdom in kingdom, sway in oversway,
Dominion fold in fold :
Like to that immemorial regal stone
Thy namesake from the northland reft away,
Symbol of sovereignty and spoil of fray,
And closed in England's throne.
So wide of girth this little cirque of gold,
So great we are, and old.
Proud from the ages are we come, O King ;
Proudly, as fits a nation that hath now
So many dawns and sunsets on her brow,
This duteous heart we bring.

II

The kings thy far forerunners ; he that came
And smote us into greatness ; he whose fame,
In dark armipotence and ivied pride,
Towers above Conway's tide,
And where Carnarvon ponders on the sea ;
He, that adventurous name,
Who left at Agincourt the knightly head
Of France and all its charging plumes o'erthrown,
But hath in Shakespeare's conquests merged his own ;
And she, a queen, yet fashioned king-like, she
Before whose prows, before whose tempests, fled
Spain on the ruining night precipitately ;
And that worn face, in camps and councils bred,
The guest who brought us law and liberty
Raised well-nigh from the dead ;
Yea, she herself, in whose immediate stead
Thou standest, in the shadow of her soul ;
All these, O King, from their seclusion dread,
And guarded palace of eternity,
Mix in thy pageant with phantasmal tread,
Hear the long waves of acclamation roll,
And with yet mightier silence marshal thee
To the awful throne thou hast inherited.

III

Lo, at the Earth's high feast, ere Autumn bring
His afterthoughts on greatness to her ear,
And with monitions of mortality
Perturb the revelling year,

Thou goest forth and art anointed King.
Nature disdains not braveries : why should we
The sombre foil to all her splendours be ?
Let London rustle with rich apparelling,
And all the ways, with festal faces lined,
Casement and coign and fluttering balcony,
Wave welcome on the wind.

Now the loud land flames with imperial gear,
And life itself, so late in hues austere
And the cold reign of iron custom bound,
Puts off its gray subjection, and is here
One moment throned and crowned.

Now the long glories prance and triumph by :
And now the pomps have passed, and we depart
Each to the peace or strife of his own heart :
And now the day whose bosom was so high
Sinks billowing down : and twilight sorceries change
Into remote and strange
What is most known and nigh :
And changelessly the river sends his sigh
Down leagues of hope and fear, and pride and shame,
And life and death ; dim-journeying passionless
To where broad estuary and beaconing ness
Look toward the outlands whence our fathers came.
And high on Druid mountains hath the sun
Flamed valediction, as the last lights died
Beyond that fatal wave, that from our side
Sunders the lovely and the lonely Bride
Whom we have wedded but have never won.

IV

And night falls on an isle whose vassal seas
 Remember not her prone regalities,
 So withered from belief, so far and faint,
 In such abjection before Time they lie,
 Kingdoms and thrones forgotten of the sky.
 Deira with her sea-face to the morn,
 And Cumbria sunset-gazing ; moist Dynaint,
 A realm of coombs and tors ; old greatnesses
 From Dee to Severn, where the bards were born
 Whose songs are in the wind by Idris' chair,
 Whose lips won battles ; and seats of puissance where,
 With long grope of his desultory hand,
 The ocean, prying deep into the land,
 By Morven and the legends of wild Lorn,
 Repents him, lost about Lochiel : all these
 Have been, and 'stablisht on their dust we stand ;
 Thy England ; with the northern sister fair,
 That hath the heath-bells in her blowing hair ;
 And the dark mountain maid
 That dreams for ever in the wizard shade,
 Hymning her heroes there.

V

O doom of overlordships ! to decay
 First at the heart, the eye scarce dimmed at all ;
 Or perish of much cumber and array,
 The burdening robe of empire, and its pall ;
 Or, of voluptuous hours the wanton prey,
 Die of the poisons that most sweetly slay ;

Or, from insensate height,
With prodigies, with light
Of trailing angers on the monstrous night,
Magnificently fall.

Far off from her that bore us be such fate,
And vain against her gate
Its knocking. But by chinks and crannies, Death,
Forbid the doorways, oft-times entereth.

Let her drink deep of discontent, and sow
Abroad the troubling knowledge. Let her show
Whence glories come, and wherefore glories go,
And what indeed are glories, unto these

"Twixt labour and the rest that is not ease
Made blank and darksome ; who have hardly heard
Sound of her loftiest names, or any word
Of all that hath in gold been said and sung,
Since him of April heart and morning tongue,
Her ageless singing-bird.

For now the day is unto them that know,
And not henceforth she stumbles on the prize ;
And yonder march the nations full of eyes.

Already is doom a-spinning, if unstirred
In leisure of ancient pathways she lose touch
Of the hour, and overmuch
Recline upon achievement, and be slow
To take the world arriving, and forget
How perilous are the stature and port that so
Invite the arrows, how unslumbering all
The hates that watch and crawl.

Nor must she, like the others, yield up yet
The generous dreams ! but rather live to be
Saluted in the hearts of men as she
Of high and singular election, set
Benignant on the sea ;
That greatly loving freedom loved to free,
And was herself the bridal and embrace
Of strength and conquering grace.

IN DREAMS

IN dreams the exile cometh home ;
In dreams the lost is found ;
In dreams the fettered slave may roam
The world around.

In dreams thou may'st a monarch be,
And sit upon a throne.
Give thanks, that this befallenth thee
In dreams alone.

SUMMER'S OVERTHROW

SUMMER is fallen, is conquered, her greatness ravished away.

We saw her broken with tempest on cliffs of the Irish shore ;

We saw her flee like the wraith of a monstrous rose, before The airy invisible hunters that hunted her night and day. And once we believed them frustrate, believed them reft of their prey,

For she suddenly flashed anew into violent splendour, defied

The yelling pack of the storm, and turned, and held them at bay.

In superb despair she faced them, she towered like June once more,—

Then, sinking, shook on the world her golden ruins, and died.

THE CHURCHYARD IN THE WOLD

I WANDERED far in the wold,
And after the heat and glare
I came at eve to a churchyard old :
The yew-trees seemed at prayer.

And around me was dust in dust,
And the fleeting light, and Repose ;
And the infinite pathos of human trust
In a God whom no man knows.

THE FIRST SKYLARK OF SPRING

TWO worlds hast thou to dwell in, Sweet,—
 The virginal untroubled sky,
And this vext region at my feet.—
 Alas, but one have I !

To all my songs there clings the shade,
 The dulling shade, of mundane care.
They amid mortal mists are made—
 Thine in immortal air.

My heart is dashed with griefs and fears ;
 My song comes fluttering, and is gone.
O high above the home of tears,
 Eternal Joy, sing on !

Not loftiest bard, of mightiest mind,
 Shall ever chant a note so pure,
Till he can cast this earth behind
 And breathe in heaven secure.

We sing of Life, with stormy breath
 That shakes the lute's distempered string :
We sing of Love, and loveless Death
 Takes up the song we sing.

And born in toils of Fate's control,
 Insurgent from the womb, we strive
With proud unmanumitted soul
 To burst the golden gyve.

Thy spirit knows nor bounds nor bars ;
On thee no shreds of thraldom hang ;
Not more enlarged, the morning stars
Their great Te Deum sang.

But I am fettered to the sod,
And but forget my bonds an hour ;
In amplitude of dreams a god,
A slave in dearth of power.

And fruitless knowledge clouds my soul,
And fretful ignorance irks it more.
Thou sing'st as if thou knew'st the whole,
And lightly held'st thy lore !

Somewhat as thou, Man once could sing,
In porches of the lucent morn,
Ere he had felt his lack of wing,
Or cursed his iron bourn.

The springtime bubbled in his throat,
The sweet sky seemed not far above,
And young and lovesome came the note ;—
Ah, thine is Youth and Love !

Thou sing'st of what he knew of old,
And dreamlike from afar recalls ;
In flashes of forgotten gold
An orient glory falls.

And as he listens, one by one
Life's utmost splendours blaze more nigh ;
Less inaccessible the sun,
Less alien grows the sky.

For thou art native to the spheres,
And of the courts of heaven art free,
And carriest to his temporal ears
News from eternity ;

And lead'st him to the dizzy verge,
And lur'st him o'er the dazzling line,
Where mortal and immortal merge,
And human dies divine.

LACRIMÆ MUSARUM

(The Death of Tennyson)

LOW, like another's, lies the laurelled head :
The life that seemed a perfect song is o'er :
Carry the last great bard to his last bed.
Land that he loved, thy noblest voice is mute.
Land that he loved, that loved him ! nevermore
Meadow of thine, smooth lawn or wild sea-shore,
Gardens of odorous bloom and tremulous fruit,
Or woodlands old, like Druid couches spread,
The master's feet shall tread.
Death's little rift hath rent the faultless lute :
The singer of undying songs is dead.

Lo, in this season pensive-hued and grave,
While fades and falls the doomed, reluctant leaf
From withered Earth's fantastic coronal,
With wandering sighs of forest and of wave
Mingles the murmur of a people's grief
For him whose leaf shall fade not, neither fall.
He hath fared forth, beyond these suns and showers.
For us, the autumn glow, the autumn flame,
And soon the winter silence shall be ours :
Him the eternal spring of fadeless fame
Crowns with no mortal flowers.

What needs his laurel our ephemeral tears,
To save from visitation of decay ?

Not in this temporal light alone, that bay
Blooms, nor to perishable mundane ears
Sings he with lips of transitory clay.
Rapt though he be from us,
Virgil salutes him, and Theocritus ;
Catullus, mightiest-brained Lucretius, each
Greets him, their brother, on the Stygian beach ;
Proudly a gaunt right hand doth Dante reach ;
Milton and Wordsworth bid him welcome home ;
Keats, on his lips the eternal rose of youth,
Doth in the name of Beauty that is Truth
A kinsman's love beseech ;
Coleridge, his locks aspersed with fairy foam,
Calm Spenser, Chaucer suave,
His equal friendship crave :
And godlike spirits hail him guest, in speech
Of Athens, Florence, Weimar, Stratford, Rome.

Nay, he returns to regions whence he came.
Him doth the spirit divine
Of universal loveliness reclaim.
All nature is his shrine.
Seek him henceforward in the wind and sea,
In earth's and air's emotion or repose,
In every star's august serenity,
And in the rapture of the flaming rose.
There seek him if ye would not seek in vain,
There, in the rhythm and music of the Whole ;
Yea, and for ever in the human soul
Made stronger and more beauteous by his strain.

For lo ! creation's self is one great choir,
And what is nature's order but the rhyme
Whereto, in holiest chime,
All things have moved with all things from their
prime ?

Who shall expound the mystery of the lyre ?
In far retreats of elemental mind
Obscurely comes and goes
The imperative breath of song, that as the wind
Is trackless, and oblivious whence it blows.
Demand of lilies wherefore they are white,
Extort her crimson secret from the rose,
But ask not of the Muse that she disclose
The meaning of the riddle of her might :
Somewhat of all things sealed and recondite,
Save the enigma of herself, she knows.

The master could not tell, with all his lore,
Wherefore he sang, or whence the mandate sped :
Ev'n as the linnet sings, so I, he said :
Ah, rather as the imperial nightingale,
That held in trance the ancient Attic shore,
And charms the ages with the notes that o'er
All woodland chants immortally prevail !

And now, from our vain plaudits greatly fled,
He with diviner silence dwells instead,
And on no earthly sea with transient roar,
Unto no earthly airs, he sets his sail,
But far beyond our vision and our hail
Is heard for ever and is seen no more.

No more, O never now,
Lord of the lofty and the tranquil brow,
Shall men behold those wizard locks where Time
Let fall no wintry rime.
Once, in his youth obscure,
The weaver of this verse, that shall endure
By splendour of its theme which cannot die.
Beheld thee eye to eye,
And touched through thee the hand
Of every hero of thy race divine,
Ev'n to the sire of all the laurelled line,
The sightless wanderer on the Ionian strand.
Yea, I beheld thee, and behold thee yet :
Thou hast forgotten, but can I forget ?
Are not thy words all goldenly impressed
On memory's palimpsest ?
I hear the utterance of thy sovereign tongue,
I tread the floor thy hallowing feet have trod ;
I see the hands a nation's lyre that strung,
The eyes that looked through life and gazed on God.

The seasons change, the winds they shift and veer ;
The grass of yesteryear
Is dead ; the birds depart, the groves decay :
Empires dissolve and peoples disappear :
Song passes not away.
Captains and conquerors leave a little dust,
And kings a dubious legend of their reign ;
The swords of Cæsars, they are less than rust :
The poet doth remain.

Dead is Augustus, Maro is alive ;
And thou, the Mantuan of this age and soil,
With Virgil shalt survive,
Enriching Time with no less honeyed spoil,
The yielded sweet of every Muse's hive ;
Heeding no more the sound of idle praise
In that great calm our tumults cannot reach,—
Master who crown'st our immelodious days
With flower of perfect speech.

ELUSION

W^{HERE} shall I find thee, Joy ? by what great
marge
With the strong seas exulting ? on what peaks
Rapt ? or astray within what forest bourn,
Thy light hands parting the resilient boughs ?

Hast thou no answer ? . . . Ah, in mine own breast
Except unsought thou spring, though I go forth
And tease the waves for news of thee, and make
Importunate inquisition of the woods
If thou didst pass that way, I shall but find
The brief print of thy footfall on sere leaves
And the salt brink, and woo thy touch in vain.

O LIKE A QUEEN

O LIKE a queen's her happy tread,
And like a queen's her golden head !
But O, at last, when all is said,
 Her woman's heart for me !

We wandered where the river gleamed
'Neath oaks that mused and pines that dreamed.
A wild thing of the woods she seemed,
 So proud, and pure, and free !

All heaven drew nigh to hear her sing,
When from her lips her soul took wing ;
The oaks forgot their pondering,
 The pines their reverie.

And O, her happy queenly tread,
And O, her queenly golden head !
But O, her heart, when all is said,
 Her woman's heart for me !

THE PLAYMATES

THE Wye and the Severn are offspring
Of dark Plinlimmon's side ;
And there they were nursed as playmates,
And then—they were sundered wide.

In ways far parted they travel,
By city and castled shore ;
And at last, after great adventures,
They meet—very old—once more.

They have long grown rich in homage ;
They are full of renown and pride ;
But they babble of how they were playmates
On dark Plinlimmon's side.

NIGHT ON CURBAR EDGE

NO echo of man's life pursues my ears ;
Nothing disputes this Desolation's reign ;
Change comes not, this dread temple to profane,
Where time by æons reckons, not by years.
Its patient form one crag, sole stranded, rears,
Type of whate'er is destined to remain
While yon still host encamped on night's waste plain
Keeps armèd watch, a million quivering spears.

Hushed are the wild and wing'd lives of the moor ;
The sleeping sheep nestle 'neath ruined wall,
Or unhewn stones in random concourse hurled :
Solitude, sleepless, listens at Fate's door ;
And there is built and 'stablisht over all,
Tremendous silence, older than the world.

THE SLAIN IN WAR

PARTNERS at last ; sharers of noteless doom ;
Peers in oblivion's commonalty merged ;
Unto like deeds by differing mandates urged,
And equalled in the unrespective tomb ;
Leal or perfidious, cruel or Ruthful, whom
Precipitate fate hath of your frailties purged ;
Whom duly the impartial winds have dirged,
In autumn or the glorying vernal bloom :
Already is your strife become as nought ;
Idle the bullet's flight, the bayonet's thrust,
The senseless cannon's dull, unmeaning word ;
Idle your feud ; and all for which ye fought
To this arbitrament of loam referred,
And cold adjudication of the dust.

1903.

THE DRAGONS*

KING VORTIGERN—so run the ancient tales—
A stronghold sought to build in wildest Wales ;
But some fell Power made frustrate each assay,
And nightly wrecked the labours of the day ;
Till Merlin came, and bade the builders all
Dig deep beneath the many-bastioned wall ;
And lo, two Dragons, o'er whose quaking lair
Nought could rise steadfast, lay and wallowed there.

Search the foundations, you that build a State :
For if the dragon forms of Wrath and Hate
Do couch below, and darkly bide their hour,
Fear walks the rampart, Fear ascends the tower.
And let it not content you that they sleep !
Drive them with strong enchantments to the deep.
First of such charms is perfect justice : then
The rare right word that conquers beasts and men.
No subtler magic serves ; no spells but these
Drive the coiled dragons to the whelming seas.

* The legend here much condensed is found in Nennius and later chroniclers. The poem was published in 1903.

APRIL

A PRIL, April,
Laugh thy girlish laughter ;
Then, the moment after,
Weep thy girlish tears !
April, that mine ears
Like a lover greetest,
If I tell thee, sweetest,
All my hopes and fears,
April, April,
Laugh thy golden laughter,
But, the moment after,
Weep thy golden tears !

CHRISTMAS DAY

THE morn broke bright : the thronging people
wore

Their best ; but in the general face I saw
No touch of veneration or of awe.
Christ's natal day ? 'Twas merely one day more
On which the mart agreed to close its door ;
A lounging-time by usage and by law
Sanctioned ; nor recked they, beyond this, one straw
Of any meaning which for man it bore !

Fated among Time's fallen leaves to stray,
We breathe an air that savours of the tomb,
Heavy with dissolution and decay ;
Waiting till some new world-emotion rise,
And with the might of the unchained simoom
Sweep hence this dying Past that never dies.

THE REAL REFORMER

NOT he, the statesman, whatsoe'er his name,
Who would strip Life of all adventurousness,
Of all but arrow-proof and storm-proof dress,
Making it more and more ignobly tame,
Poorer in perils which they that overcame
Were braced and manned by,—making it less and less
The school of heroes armed for struggle and stress,—
Not he shall win hereafter radiant fame.
But when some dauntless teller of truth unsweet
Shall shake the slumberous People, with rude power,
To a vast New Birth of all the soul and mind,
Him, and none other, at the destined hour,
Him, quick or dead, the thunderous thanks shall greet,
Not of his country alone, but of his kind.

MELANCHOLIA

IN the cold starlight, on the barren beach,
Where to the stones the rent sea-tresses clave,
I heard the long hiss of the backward wave
Down the steep shingle, and the hollow speech
Of murmurous cavern-lips, nor other breach
Of ancient silence. None was with me, save
Thoughts that were neither glad nor sweet nor brave,
But restless comrades, each the foe of each.
And I beheld the waters in their might
Writhe as a dragon by some great spell curbed
And foiled ; and one lone sail ; and over me
The everlasting taciturnity ;
The august, inhospitable, inhuman night,
Glittering magnificently unperturbed.

THE WORLD IN ARMOUR*

I

UNDER this shade of crimson wings abhorred
That never wholly leaves the sky serene,—
While Vengeance sleeps a sleep so light, between
Dominions that acclaim Thee overlord,—
Sadly the blast of Thy tremendous word,
Whate'er its mystic purport may have been,
Echoes across the ages, Nazarene :
Not to bring peace Mine errand, but a sword.

For lo, Thy world uprises and lies down
In armour, and its Peace is War, in all
Save the great death that weaves War's dreadful crown :
War unennobled by heroic pain :
War without triumph, without glorious fall,
War that sits smiling, with the eyes of Cain.

II

When London's Plague, that day by day enrolled
His thousands dead, nor deigned his rage to abate
Till grass was green in silent Bishopsgate,
Had come and passed like thunder,—still, 'tis told,
The monster, driven to earth, in hovels old
And haunts obscure, though dormant, lingered late,
Till the dread Fire, one roaring wave of fate,
Rose, and swept clean his last retreat and hold.

* These three sonnets were first published in 1904, ten years before the outbreak of the Great War.

In Europe live the dregs of Plague to-day,
Dregs of full many an ancient Plague and dire,—
Old wrongs, old lies of ages blind and cruel.
What if alone the world-war's world-wide fire
Can purge the ambushed pestilence away ?
Yet woe to him that idly lights the fuel !

III

A moment's fantasy, the vision came
Of Europe dipped in fiery death, and so
Mounting re-born, with vestal limbs aglow,
Splendid and fragrant from her bath of flame.
It fleeted ; and a phantom without name,
Sightless, dismembered, terrible, said : “ Lo,
I am that ravished Europe men shall know
After the morn of blood and night of shame.”

The spectre passed, and I beheld alone
The Europe of the present, as she stands,
Powerless from terror of her own vast power,
'Neath novel stars, beside a brink unknown ;
And round her the sad Kings, with sleepless hands,
Piling the fagots, hour by doomful hour.

THE TOMB OF BURNS

WHAT woos the world to yonder shrine ?
What sacred clay, what dust divine ?
Was this some Master faultless-fine,
In whom we praise
The cunning of the jewelled line
And carven phrase ?

A searcher of our source and goal,
A reader of God's secret scroll ?
A Shakespeare, flashing o'er the whole
Of man's domain
The splendour of his cloudless soul
And perfect brain ?

Some Keats, to Grecian gods allied,
Clasping all beauty as his bride ?
Some Shelley, soaring dim-descried
Above Time's throng,
And heavenward hurling wild and wide
His spear of song ?

A lonely Wordsworth, from the crowd
Half hid in light, half veiled in cloud ?
A sphere-born Milton, cold and proud,
In hallowing dews
Dipt, and with gorgeous ritual vowed
Unto the Muse ?

Nay, none of these,—and little skilled
On heavenly heights to sing and build !
Thine, thine, O Earth, whose fields he tilled,
 And thine alone,
Was he whose fiery heart lies stilled
 'Neath yonder stone.

He came when poets had forgot
How rich and strange the human lot ;
How warm the tints of Life ; how hot
 Are Love and Hate ;
And what makes Truth divine, and what
 Makes Manhood great.

A ghostly troop, in pale amaze
They melted 'neath that living gaze,—
His in whose spirit's gusty blaze
 We seem to hear
The crackling of their phantom bays
 Sapless and sere !

For, mid an age of dust and dearth,
Once more had bloomed immortal worth.
There, in the strong, splenetic North,
 The Spring began.
A mighty mother had brought forth
 A mighty man.

No mystic torch through Time he bore,
No virgin veil from Life he tore ;
His soul no bright insignia wore
 Of starry birth ;
He saw what all men see—no more—
 In heaven and earth :

But as, when thunder crashes nigh,
All darkness opes one flaming eye,
And the world leaps against the sky,—
 So fiery-clear
Did the old truths that we pass by
 To him appear.

How could he 'scape the doom of such
As feel the airiest phantom-touch
Keenlier than others feel the clutch
 Of iron powers,—
Who die of having lived so much
 In their large hours ?

He erred, he sinned : and if there be
Who, from his hapless frailties free,
Rich in the poorer virtues, see
 His faults alone,—
To such, O Lord of Charity,
 Be mercy shown !

Singly he faced the bigot brood,
The meanly wise, the feebly good ;
He pelted them with pearl, with mud ;
 He fought them well,—
But ah, the stupid million stood,
 And he—he fell !

All bright and glorious at the start,
"Twas his ignobly to depart,
Slain by his own too affluent heart,
 Too generous blood ;
A voyager that lost life's chart
 In midmost flood.

So closes the fantastic fray,
The duel of the spirit and clay !
So come bewildering disarray
 And blurring gloom,
The irremediable day
 And final doom.

So passes, all confusedly
As lights that hurry, shapes that flee
About some brink we dimly see,
 The trivial, great,
Squalid, majestic tragedy
 Of human fate.

Not ours to gauge the more or less,
The will's defect, the blood's excess,
The earthy humours that oppress
 The radiant mind.

His greatness, not his littleness,
 Concerns mankind.

.A dreamer of the common dreams,
Here, 'mid the world that round us streams,
He chased the transitory gleams
 That all pursue ;
But on his lips the eternal themes
 Again were new.

With shattering ire or withering mirth
He smote each worthless claim to worth.
The barren fig-tree cumbering Earth
 He would not spare.
Through ancient lies of proudest birth
 He drove his share.

To him the Powers that formed him brave,
Yet weak to breast the fatal wave,
A mighty gift of Hatred gave,—
 A gift, above
All other gifts, benefic, save
 The gift of Love.

He saw 'tis meet that Man possess
The will to curse as well as bless,
To pity—and be pitiless,
 To make, and mar :
The fierceness that from tenderness
 Is never far.

And so his fierce and tender strain
Lives, and his idlest words remain
To flout oblivion, that in vain
 Strives to destroy
One lightest record of his pain
 Or of his joy.

And though thrice statelier names decay,
His own can wither not away
While plighted lass and lad shall stray
 Among the broom,
Where evening touches glen and brae
 With rosy gloom ;

While Hope and Love with Youth abide ;
While Age sits at the ingleside ;
While yet there have not wholly died
 The heroic fires,
The patriot passion, and the pride
 In noble sires ;

While, with the conquering Teuton breed
Whose fair estate of speech and deed
Heritors north and south of Tweed
Alike may claim,
The dimly mingled Celtic seed
Flowers like a flame ;

While nations see in holy trance
That vision of the world's advance
Which glorified his countenance
When from afar
He hailed the Hope that shot o'er France
Its crimson star ;

While, plumed for flight, the Soul deplores
The cage that foils the wing that soars ;
And while, through adamantine doors
In dreams flung wide,
We hear, around these mortal shores,
The immortal tide.

SONG IN AN ARCHAIC MANNER

SWEETEST sweets that Time hath rifled
Live anew on lyric tongue—
Tresses with which Paris trifled,
Lips to Antony's that clung.
These surrender not their rose,
Nor their golden puissance those.

Vain the envious loam that covers
Her of Egypt, her of Troy :
Helen's, Cleopatra's lovers
Still desire them, still enjoy.
Fate but stole what Song restored :
Vain the aspic, vain the cord.

Idly clanged the sullen portal,
Idly the sepulchral door :
Fame the mighty, Love the immortal,
These than foolish dust are more :
Nor may captive Death refuse
Homage to the conquering Muse.

VITA NUOVA

LONG hath she slept, forgetful of delight :
At last, at last, the enchanted princess, Earth,
Claimed with a kiss by Spring the adventurer,
In slumber knows the destined lips, and thrilled
Through all the deeps of her unageing heart
With passionate necessity of joy,
Wakens, and yields her loveliness to love.

O ancient streams, O far-descended woods
Full of the fluttering of melodious souls ;
O hills and valleys that adorn yourselves
In solemn jubilation ; winds and clouds,
Ocean and land in stormy nuptials clasped,
And all exuberant creatures that acclaim
The Earth's divine renewal : lo, I too
With yours would mingle somewhat of glad song.
I too have come through wintry terrors,—yea,
Through tempest and through cataclysm of soul
Have come, and am delivered. Me the Spring,
Me also, dimly with new life hath touched,
And with regenerate hope, the salt of life ;
And I would dedicate these thankful tears
To whatsoever Power beneficent,
Veiled though his countenance, undivulged his thought,
Hath led me from the haunted darkness forth
Into the gracious air and vernal morn,

And suffers me to know my spirit a note
Of this great chorus, one with bird and stream
And voiceful mountain,—nay, a string, how jarred
And all but broken ! of that lyre of life
Whereon himself, the master harp-player,
Resolving all its mortal dissonance
To one immortal and most perfect strain,
Harps without pause, building with song the world.

18th March, 1893.

PEACE AND WAR

THE sleek sea, gorged and sated, basking lies ;
The cruel creature fawns and blinks and
purrs ;
And almost we forget what fangs are hers,
And trust for once her emerald-golden eyes ;
Though haply on the morrow she shall rise
And summon her infernal ministers,
And charge her everlasting barriers,
With wild white fingers snatching at the skies.

So, betwixt Peace and War, man's life is cast ;
Yet hath he dreamed of perfect Peace at last
Shepherding all the nations ev'n as sheep.
The inconstant, moody ocean shall as soon,
At the cold dictates of the bloodless moon,
Swear an eternity of halcyon sleep.

1904.

WORLD-STRANGENESS

STANGE the world about me lies,
Never yet familiar grown—
Still disturbs me with surprise,
Haunts me like a face half known.

In this house with starry dome,
Floored with gemlike plains and seas,
Shall I never feel at home,
Never wholly be at ease ?

On from room to room I stray,
Yet my Host can ne'er esp'y,
And I know not to this day
Whether guest or captive I.

So, between the starry dome
And the floor of plains and seas,
I have never felt at home,
Never wholly been at ease.

1888.

WALES : A GREETING*

IN that wild land beyond Sabrina's wave ;
In vales full of the voice of bards long mute,
From Gwent to far Demetia by the sea ;
Or northward unto cloud-roof'd Gwynedd, where
The mountains sit together and talk with heaven,
While Mona pushing forth into the deep
Looks back for ever on their musing brows :
By silent mound and menhir, camp and cairn,
Leaf-hidden stream, and cataract's thunderous plunge ;
In summer calms, or when the storming North
Whitens Eryri's crest and Siabod's cone,—
Have I not roamed and lingered, from my youth,
An alien and a stranger, but amidst
A people gravely kind as suavely proud ?—
A people caring for old dreams and deeds,
Heroic story, and far-descended song ;
Honouring their poets, not in death alone,
But in life also, as is meet and well ;
An ancient folk, speaking an ancient speech,
And cherishing in their bosoms all their past,
Yet in whose fiery love of their own land
No hatred of another's finds a place.

Sons—daughters—of Wild Wales, whose kindred swayed
This island, ages ere an English word
Was breathed in Britain,—let an English voice
Hail and salute you here at England's heart.

* Published in June, 1909, during the holding of the
National Eisteddfod in London.

On Europe, east and west, the dim clouds brood,
Disperse, and gather again ; and none can tell
What birth they hold within them. But we know
That should they break in tempest on these shores,
You, that with differing blood, with differing spirit,
Yet link your life with ours, with ours your fate,
Will stand beside us in the hurricane,
Steadfast, whatever peril may befall :
Will feel no separate heartbeats from our own,
Nor aught but oneness with this mighty Power,
This Empire, that despite her faults and sins
Loves justice, and loves mercy, and loves truth,
When truly she beholds them ; and who thus
Helps to speed on, through dark and difficult ways,
The ever-climbing footsteps of the world.

London, June 15, 1909.

LEAVETAKING

PASS, thou wild light,
Wild light on peaks that so
Grieve to let go
The day.
Lovely thy tarrying, lovely too is night :
Pass thou away.

Pass, thou wild heart,
Wild heart of youth that still
Hast half a will
To stay.
I grow too old a comrade, let us part.
Pass thou away.

SHELLEY'S CENTENARY*

WITHIN a narrow span of time,
Three princes of the realm of rhyme,
At height of youth or manhood's prime
From earth took wing,
To join the fellowship sublime
Who, dead, yet sing.

He, first, his earliest wreath who wove
Of laurel grown in Latmian grove,
Conquered by pain and hapless love
Found calmer home,
Roofed by the heaven that glows above
Eternal Rome.

A fierier soul, its own fierce prey,
And cumbered more with mortal clay,
At Missolonghi flamed away,
And left the air
Reverberating to this day
Its loud despair.

Alike remote from Byron's scorn
And Keats's magic as of morn
Bursting for ever newly-born
On forests old,
To wake a hoary world forlorn
With touch of gold,

* August 4, 1892 ; the centenary of his birth.

Shelley, the cloud-begot, who grew
Nourished on starbeams, air, and dew,
Into that Essence whence he drew
 His life and lyre
Was fittingly resolved anew
 Through wave and fire.

And it was strangely, wildly meet,
That he, who brooked not Time's slow feet,
With passage thus abrupt and fleet
 Should hurry hence,
Eager the Great Perhaps to greet
 With Why ? and Whence ?

Impatient of the world's fixed way,
He ne'er could suffer God's delay,
But all the future in a day
 Would build divine,
And the whole past in ruins lay,
 An emptied shrine.

Vain vision ! but the glow, the fire,
The passion of benign desire,
These peradventure lift him higher
 Than many a soul
That mounts a million paces nigher
 Its meaner goal.

And power is his, if naught besides,
In that thin ether where he rides,
Above the roar of human tides
 To ascend afar,
Lost in a storm of light that hides
 His dizzy car.

Below, the unhasting world toils on,
And here and there are victories won,
Some dragon slain, some justice done,
 While, 'mid the skies,
A meteor rushing on the sun,
 He flares and dies.

But, as he cleaves yon ether clear,
Notes from the unattempted sphere
He scatters to the oft heedless ear
 Of Earth's dim throng.
Nay, from the zenith he flings sheer
 His torrent of song.

In other shapes than he forecast,
Fate moulds the Morrow. His fierce blast,—
His wild assault upon the Past,—
 These things are vain.
Brief is Revolt, but born to last
 Was the arrowy strain,

That seems the wandering voices blent
Of every virgin element ;
A sound from ocean caverns sent ;
 An airy call
From the Uranian firmament
 O'erdoming all.

And in this world of worldlings, where
Souls rust in apathy, and ne'er
A great emotion shakes the air,
 And life flags tame,
And rare is noble impulse, rare
 The impassioned aim,

'Tis no mean fortune to have heard
A singer who, if errors blurred
His sight, had yet a spirit stirred
 By vast desire,
And ardour fledging the swift word
 With plumes of fire.

A creature of impetuous breath,
Our torpor deadlier than death
He knew not ; whatsoe'er he saith
 Flashes with life :
He spurreth men, he quickeneth
 To splendid strife.

And in his gusts of song he brings
Wild odours shaken from strange wings,
And carries secret whisperings
 From far lips blown,
While all the rapturous heart of things
 Throbs through his own,—

His own that from the burning pyre
One who had loved his wind-swept lyre
Out of the sharp teeth of the fire
 Unmolten drew,
Beside the sea that in her ire
 Smote him and slew.

ESTRANGEMENT

SO, without overt breach, we fall apart,
Tacitly sunder—neither you nor I
Conscious of one intelligible Why,
And both, from severance, winning equal smart.
So, with resigned and acquiescent heart,
Whene'er your name on some chance lip may lie,
I seem to see an alien shade pass by,
A spirit wherein I have no lot or part.
Thus may a captive, in some fortress grim,
From casual speech betwixt his warders, learn
That June on her triumphal progress goes
Through arched and bannered woodlands ; while for
him
She is a legend emptied of concern,
And idle is the rumour of the rose.

THE BALLAD OF SEMMERWATER

(North-Country Legend).

DEEP asleep, deep asleep,
Deep asleep it lies,
The still lake of Semmerwater
Under the still skies.

And many a fathom, many a fathom,
Many a fathom below,
In a king's tower and a queen's bower
The fishes come and go.

Once there stood by Semmerwater
A mickle town and tall ;
King's tower and queen's bower,
And the wakeman on the wall.

Came a beggar halt and sore :
“ I faint for lack of bread.”
King's tower and queen's bower
Cast him forth unfed.

He knocked at the door of the herdman's cot,
The herdman's cot in the dale.
They gave him of their oatcake,
They gave him of their ale.

He has cursed aloud that city proud,
He has cursed it in its pride ;
He has cursed it into Semmerwater
Down the brant hillside ;
He has cursed it into Semmerwater,
There to bide.

King's tower and queen's bower,
And a mickle town and tall ;
By glimmer of scale and gleam of fin,
Folk have seen them all.

King's tower and queen's bower,
And weed and reed in the gloom ;
And a lost city in Semmerwater,
Deep asleep till Doom.

TO MY MOTHER'S MEMORY

THIS is the summit, wild and lone.
Westward the loftier mountains stand.
Let me look eastward on mine own
Ancestral land.

O sing me songs, O tell me tales,
Of yonder valleys at my feet !
She was a daughter of those dales,
A daughter sweet.

Oft did she speak of homesteads there,
And faces that her childhood knew.
She speaks no more ; and scarce I dare
To deem it true,

That somehow she can still behold
Sunlight and moonlight, earth and sea,
Which were among the gifts untold
She gave to me.

August, 1897.

THE CATHEDRAL MUSIC

I ENTERED a dim minster, where
Aisles of praise and towers of prayer
Fenced me round from all the strife
Of this illegible, blurred life ;
And I put from me, one by one,
Riddles that bemuse the Sun,
And deep into oblivion hurled
The undecipherable world.

And through the rich and jewelled gloom
That rubied some crusader's tomb,
Rose and rolled a golden wave :
Surged reverberant down the nave :
Ravishingly, with violence sweet,
Stormed the earth from 'neath my feet :
Swept me as a leaf abroad
In great tides of billowing laud :
And left me, amid regions far,
Desolate—cast upon a star.

THE GEMS

HOW fair these stones, and with what deftness
graven !

Here Hermes binds Ixion to the wheel.

Here is the yet unfreed Andromeda.

There Theseus slays the Minotaur. There Daphne

Her great Pursuer flies. On this is figured

The moon-cold Goddess of the bow and quiver.

On this Medea drives her dragon team.

Lo, Psyche there, at last made one with Eros,

And all her sorrows over ! And on this sard

You may behold Achilles, not in wrath,

But with a brow of pity, as when he mourned

Penthesilea.

Fair, fair gems indeed.

THE WASTED LURES

YOU dwellers among semblances : you souls
That even to Life's end loved chiefly Life's
Habiliments and accoutrements and gear :
Resolved to its essence, reads not thus your story ?
Awaiting still the visit of Happiness,
And listening long for her light step, you made
Elaborate preparation to receive
A shy and simple guest, who, warned of all
The lavish, ceremonious entertainment
You purposed in her honour, never came.

IN LALEHAM CHURCHYARD*

’T WAS at this season, year by year,
The singer who lies songless here
Was wont to woo a less austere,
Less deep repose,
Where Rotha to Winandermere
Unresting flows,—

Flows through a land where torrents call
To far-off torrents as they fall,
And mountains in their cloudy pall
Keep ghostly state,
And Nature makes majestical
Man’s lowliest fate.

There, ’mid the August glow, still came
He of the twice-illustrious name,
The loud impertinence of fame
Not loth to flee—
Not loth with brooks and fells to claim
Fraternity.

Linked with his happy youthful lot,
Is Loughrigg, then, at last forgot ?
Nor silent peak nor dalesman’s cot
Looks on his grave.
Lulled by the Thames he sleeps, and not
By Rotha’s wave.

* The burial-place of Matthew Arnold.

"Tis fittest thus ! for though with skill
He sang of beck and tarn and ghyll,
The deep, authentic mountain-thrill
 Ne'er shook his page !
Somewhat of worldling mingled still
 With bard and sage.

And 'twere less meet for him to lie
Guarded by summits lone and high
That traffic with the eternal sky
 And hear, unawed,
The everlasting fingers ply
 The loom of God,

Than, in this hamlet of the plain,
A less sublime repose to gain,
Where Nature, genial and urbane,
 To man defers,
Yielding to us the right to reign,
 Which yet is hers.

And nigh to where his bones abide,
The Thames with its unruffled tide
Seems like his genius typified,—
 Its strength, its grace,
Its lucid gleam, its sober pride,
 Its tranquil pace.

But ah ! not his the eventual fate
Which doth the journeying wave await—
Doomed to resign its limpid state
 And quickly grow
Turbid as passion, dark as hate,
 And wide as woe.

Rather, it may be, overmuch
He shunned the common stain and smutch,
From soilure of ignoble touch
 Too grandly free,
Too loftily secure in such
 Cold purity.

But he preserved from chance control
The fortress of his 'stablisht soul ;
In all things sought to see the Whole ;
 Brooked no disguise ;
And set his heart upon the goal,
 Not on the prize ;

And with those few he shall survive
Who seem not to compete or strive,
Yet with the foremost still arrive,
 Prevailing still :
The Elect with whom the stars connive
 To work their will.

ABDICTION

I THINK you never were of earthly frame,
O truant from some charmèd world unknown !
A fairy empress, you forsook your throne,
Fled your inviolate court, and hither came ;
Donned mortal vesture ; wore a woman's name ;
Like a mere woman, loved ; and so are grown
At last a little human, save alone
For the wild elvish heart not Love could tame.
And one day I believe you will return
To your far isle amid the enchanted sea,—
There, in your realm, perhaps remember me,
Perhaps forget : but I shall never learn !
I, loveless dust within a dreamless urn,
Dead to your beauty's immortality.

THE WINTER SLEEP

A MAIDEN o'erwearied
With dance and song,
The Earth,
The Earth,
The Earth sleeps long.

And her dreams are all
Of one mad sweet thing—
The kisses,
The kisses,
The kisses of Spring.

Awake, O maiden,
For joy draws near.
Thy lover,
Thy lover,
Thy lover is here.

TO A STRENUOUS CRITIC

YOU scorn as idle—you who praise
Each posturing hero of the herd—
The lofty bearing of a phrase,
The noble countenance of a word.

“ This has no import for the age ! ”
And so your votive wreaths you heap
On him who brought unto our Stage
A mightier dulness o'er the deep.

Great Heaven ! When these with clamour shrill
Drift out to Lethe's harbour bar,
A verse of Lovelace shall be still
As vivid as a pulsing star.

THE FRONTIER

AT the hushed brink of twilight,—when, as though

Some solemn journeying phantom paused to lay
An ominous finger on the awestruck day,
Earth holds her breath till that great presence go,—
A moment comes of visionary glow,
Pendulous 'twixt the gold hour and the grey,
Lovelier than these, more eloquent than they
Of memory, foresight, and life's ebb and flow.

So have I known, in some fair woman's face,
While viewless yet was Time's more gross imprint,
The first, faint, hesitant, elusive hint
Of that invasion of the vandal years
Seem deeper beauty than youth's cloudless grace,
Wake subtler dreams, and touch me nigh to tears.

ENGLAND MY MOTHER

I

ENGLAND my mother,
Wardress of waters,
Builder of peoples,
Maker of men,—

Hast thou yet leisure
Left for the muses ?
Heed'st thou the songsmith
Forging the rhyme ?

Deafened with tumults,
How canst thou hearken ?
Strident is faction,
Demos is loud.

Lazarus, hungry,
Menaces Dives ;
Labour the giant
Chafes in his hold.

Yet do the songsmiths
Quit not their forges ;
Still on life's anvil
Forge they the rhyme.

Still the rapt faces
Glow from the furnace :
Breath of the smithy
Scorches their brows.

Yea, and thou hear'st them ?
So shall the hammers
Fashion not vainly
Verses of gold.

II

Lo, with the ancient
Roots of man's nature,
Twines the eternal
Passion of song.

Ever Love fans it,
Ever Life feeds it ;
Time cannot age it,
Death cannot slay.

Deep in the world-heart
Stand its foundations,
Tangled with all things,
Twin-made with all.

Nay, what is Nature's
Self, but an endless
Strife toward music,
Euphony, rhyme ?

Trees in their blooming,
Tides in their flowing,
Stars in their circling,
Tremble with song.

God on His throne is
Eldest of poets :
Unto His measures
Moveth the Whole.

III

Therefore deride not
Speech of the muses,
England my mother,
Maker of men.

Nations are mortal,
Fragile is greatness ;
Fortune may fly thee,
Song shall not fly.

Song the all-girdling,
Song cannot perish :
Men shall make music,
Man shall give ear.

Not while the choric
Chant of creation
Floweth from all things,
Poured without pause,

Cease we to echo
Faintly the descant
Whereto for ever
Dances the world.

IV

So let the songsmith
Proffer his rhyme-gift,
England my mother,
 Maker of men.

Grey grows thy count'nance,
Full of the ages ;
Time on thy forehead
 Sits like a dream :

Song is the potion
All things renewing,
Youth's one elixir,
 Fountain of morn.

Thou, at the world-loom
Weaving thy future,
Fitly may'st temper
 Toil with delight.

Deemest thou, labour
Only is earnest ?
Grave is all beauty,
 Solemn is joy.

Song is no bauble—
Slight not the songsmith,
England my mother,
 Maker of men.

THE FATHER OF THE FOREST

I

O LD emperor Yew, fantastic sire,
Girt with thy guard of dotard kings,—
What ages hast thou seen retire
Into the dusk of alien things ?
What mighty news hath stormed thy shade,
Of armies perished, realms unmade ?

Already wast thou great and wise,
And solemn with exceeding eld,
On that proud morn when England's eyes,
Wet with tempestuous joy, beheld
Round her rough coasts the thundering main
Strewn with the ruined dream of Spain.

Hardly thou count'st them long ago,
The warring faiths, the wavering land,
The reddened sky's delirious glow,
And Cranmer's scorched, uplifted hand.
Wailed not the woods their task of shame,
Doomed to provide the insensate flame ?

Mourned not the rumouring winds, when she,
The sweet queen of a tragic hour,
Crowned with her snow-white memory
The crimson legend of the Tower ?
Or when a thousand witcheries lay
Felled without ruth, at Fotheringay ?

Ah, thou hast heard the iron tread
And clang of many an armoured age,
And well recall'st the famous dead,
Captains or counsellors brave or sage,
Kings that on kings their myriads hurled,
Ladies whose smile embroiled the world.

Rememberest thou the perfect knight,
The soldier, courtier, bard in one,
Sidney, that pensive Hesper-light
O'er Chivalry's departed sun ?
Knew'st thou the virtue, sweetness, lore,
Whose nobly hapless name was More ?

The roystering prince, that afterward
Belied his madcap youth, and proved
A greatly simple warrior lord
Such as our warrior fathers loved—
Lives he not still ? for Shakespeare sings
The last of our adventurer kings.

His battles o'er, he takes his ease,
Glory put by, and sceptred toil.
Round him the carven centuries
Like forest branches arch and coil.
In that dim fane, he is not sure
Who lost or won at Azincour !

Roofed by the mother minster vast
That guards Augustine's rugged throne,
The darling of a knightly Past
Sleeps in his bed of sculptured stone,
And flings, o'er many a warlike tale,
The shadow of his sable mail.

The monarch who, albeit his crown
Graced an august and sapient head,
Rode roughshod to a stained renown
• O'er Wallace and Llewellyn dead,
And eased at last by Solway strand
His restless heart and ruthless hand ;

Or that disastrous king on whom
Fate, like a tempest, early fell,
And the dark secret of whose doom
The Keep of Pomfret kept full well ;
Or him whose lightly leaping words
On Becket drew the dastard swords ;

Or Eleanor's undaunted son,
That, starred with idle glory, came
Bearing from 'leagurered Ascalon
The barren splendour of his fame,
And, vanquished by a stripling's bow,
Lies vainly great at Fontevraud ;

Or him, the footprints of whose power
Made mightier whom he overthrew ;
A man built like a mountain-tower,
A fortress of heroic thew ;
The Conqueror, in our soil who set
This stem of Kinghood flowering yet ;—

These, or the living fame of these,
Perhaps thou minglest—who shall say ?—
With ev'n remoter memories,
And phantoms of the mistier day,
Long ere the tanner's daughter's son
From Harold's hands this realm had won.

What years are thine, not mine to guess !
The stars look youthful, thou being by ;
Youthful the sun's glad-heartedness ;
Witless of time the unageing sky !
And these dim-groping roots around
So deep a human Past are wound,

That, musing in thy shade, for me
The tidings scarce would strangely fall
Of pagan despots of the sea
Scaling fierce-eyed our ocean wall,
From their dark ships of norland pine,
Their surf-steeds, ridden o'er wilds of brine.

Nay, hid by thee from Summer's gaze
That seeks in vain this couch of loam,
I should behold, without amaze,
Camped on yon down the hosts of Rome,
Nor start though these lulled woodlands heard
The self-same mandatory word

As by the Cataracts of the Nile
Marshalled the legions long ago,
Or where the lakes are one blue smile
'Neath pageants of Helvetian snow,
Or 'mid the Syrian sands that lie
Sick of the day's great tearless eye,

Or on barbaric plains afar,
Where, under Asia's fevering ray,
The long lines of imperial war
O'er Tigris passed, and with dismay
In fanged and iron deserts found
Embattled Persia closing round,

And 'mid their eagles watched on high
The vultures gathering for a feast,
Till, from the quivers of the sky,
The gorgeous star-flight of the East
Flamed, and the bow of darkness bent
O'er Julian dying in his tent.

Was it the wind befooling me
With ancient echoes, as I lay ?
Was it the antic fantasy
Whose elvish mockeries cheat the day ?
Surely a hollow murmur stole
From wizard bough and ghostly bole :

“ Who prates to me of arms and kings,
Here in these courts of old repose ?
Thy babble is of transient things,
Broils, and the dust of foolish blows.
Thy sounding annals are at best
The witness of a world’s unrest.

“ Goodly the loud ostents to thee,
And pomps of time : to me more sweet
The vigils of Eternity,
And Silence patient at my feet ;
And dreams beyond the deadening range
And dull monotonies of Change.

“ Often an air comes idling by
With news of cities and of men.
I hear a multitudinous sigh,
And lapse into my soul again.
Shall her great noons and sunsets be
Blurred with thine infelicity ?

“ Now from these sinews, year by year,
Strength and the lust of life depart ;
Full of mortality is here
The cavern that was once my heart !
Me, with blind arm, in season due,
Let the aerial woodman hew.

“ For not though mightiest mortals fall,
The starry chariot hangs delayed.
His axle is uncooled, nor shall
The thunder of His wheels be stayed.
A changeless pace His coursers keep,
And halt not at the wells of sleep.

“ The South shall bless, the East shall blight,
The red rose of the Dawn shall blow ;
The million-lilied stream of Night
Wide in ethereal meadows flow ;
And Autumn mourn ; and everything
Dance to the wild pipe of the Spring.

“ With oceans heedless round her feet,
And the indifferent heavens above,
Earth shall the ancient tale repeat
Of wars and tears, and death and love ;
And, wise from all the foolish Past,
Shall peradventure hail at last

“ The advent of that morn divine
When nations may as forests grow,
Wherein the oak hates not the pine,
Nor beeches wish the cedars woe,
But all, in their unlikeness, blend
Confederate to one golden end—

“ Beauty : the Vision whereunto,
In joy, with pantings, from afar,
Through sound and odour, form and hue,
And mind and clay, and worm and star—
Now touching goal, now backward hurled—
Toils the indomitable world.”

1905.

SHAKESPEARE

LET me leave the plains behind,
And let me leave the vales below
Into the highlands of the mind,
Into the mountains let me go.

My Keats, my Spenser, loved I well ;
Gardens and statued lawns were these ;
But not for ever would I dwell
In arbours and in pleasantries.

Here are the heights, crest beyond crest,
Loftiest of all things cloud-encurled :
And I will watch from Everest
The onsweep of the surgeful world.

THE HEART OF THE ROSE

THE Poet talked with the happy Rose,
And oft did the Rose repeat
How all her care was but to be fair,
And all her task to be sweet.

Ah, rash was the Rose—the tragic Rose !
She hath bared to the Poet her heart !
And now he can take it, and crush and break it,
And rich in its attar depart.

THE COUNSEL OF PAN

VENUS, of her might being shorn,
Came to Pan for counsel wise.
In her hair was all the Morn :
All the Sea was in her eyes.

Brief his words were : “ Let us twain
Earth’s dominion ’twixt us part ;
I on her cool breast to reign—
Thou within her burning heart.”

So her secret court she holds,
Deeper than Pan’s eyes may see ;
He, in vales and dells and wolds,
Piping to eternity.

WORDSWORTH'S GRAVE

I

THE old rude church, with bare, bald tower, is here ;
Beneath its shadow high-born Rotha flows ;
Rotha, remembering well who slumbers near,
And with cool murmur lulling his repose.

Rotha, remembering well who slumbers near.

His hills, his lakes, his streams are with him yet.
Surely the heart that read her own heart clear
Nature forgets not soon : 'tis we forget.

We that with vagrant soul his fixity
Have slighted ; faithless, done his deep faith wrong ;
Left him for poorer loves, and bowed the knee
To misbegotten strange new gods of song.

Yet, led by hollow ghost or beckoning elf
Far from her homestead to the desert bourn,
'The vagrant soul returning to herself,
Wearily wise, must needs to him return.

To him and to the powers that with him dwell :—
Inflowings that divulged not whence they came ;
And that secluded Spirit unknowable,
The mystery we make darker with a name ;

The Somewhat which we name but cannot know,
Ev'n as we name a star and only see
His quenchless flashings forth, which ever show
And ever hide him, and which are not he.

II

Poet who sleepest by this wandering wave !
When thou wast born, what birth-gift hadst thou then ?
To thee what wealth was that the Immortals gave,
The wealth thou gavest in thy turn to men ?

Not Milton's keen, translunar music thine ;
Not Shakespeare's cloudless, boundless human view ;
Not Shelley's flush of rose on peaks divine ;
Nor yet the wizard twilight Coleridge knew.

What hadst thou that could make so large amends
For all thou hadst not and thy peers possessed,
Motion and fire, swift means to radiant ends ?—
Thou hadst, for weary feet, the gift of rest.

From Shelley's dazzling glow or thunderous haze,
From Byron's tempest-anger, tempest-mirth,
Men turned to thee and found—not blast and blaze,
Tumult of tottering heavens, but peace on earth.

Nor peace that grows by Lethe, scentless flower,
There in white languors to decline and cease ;
But peace whose names are also rapture, power,
Clear sight, and love : for these are parts of peace.

III

I hear it vouched the Muse is with us still ;—
If less divinely frenzied than of yore,
In lieu of feelings she has wondrous skill
To simulate emotion felt no more.

Not such the authentic Presence pure, that made
This valley vocal in the great days gone !—
In *his* great days, while yet the spring-time played
About him, and the mighty morning shone.

No word-mosaic artificer, he sang
A lofty song of lowly weal and dole.
Right from the heart, right to the heart it sprang,
Or from the soul leapt instant to the soul.

He felt the charm of childhood, grace of youth,
Grandeur of age, insisting to be sung.
The impassioned argument was simple truth
Half-wondering at its own melodious tongue.

Impassioned ? ay, to the song's ecstatic core !
But far removed were clangour, storm and feud ;
For plenteous health was his, exceeding store
Of joy, and an impassioned quietude.

IV

A hundred years ere he to manhood came,
Song from celestial heights had wandered down,
Put off her robe of sunlight, dew and flame,
And donned a modish dress to charm the Town.

Thenceforth she but festooned the porch of things ;
Apt at life's lore, incurious what life meant.
Dextrous of hand, she struck her lute's few strings ;
Ignobly perfect, barrenly content.

Unflushed with ardour and unblanched with awe,
Her lips in profitless derision curled,
She saw with dull emotion—if she saw—
The vision of the glory of the world.

The human masque she watched, with dreamless eyes
In whose clear shallows lurked no trembling shade :
The stars, unkenned by her, might set and rise,
Unmarked by her, the daisies bloom and fade.

The age grew sated with her sterile wit.
Herself waxed weary on her loveless throne.
Men felt life's tide, the sweep and surge of it,
And craved a living voice, a natural tone.

For none the less, though song was but half true,
The world lay common, one abounding theme.
Man joyed and wept, and fate was ever new,
And love was sweet, life real, death no dream.

In sad, stern verse the rugged scholar-sage
Bemoaned his toil unvalued, youth uncheered.
His numbers wore the vesture of the age,
But, 'neath it beating, the great heart was heard.

From dewy pastures, uplands sweet with thyme,
A virgin breeze freshened the jaded day.
It wafted Collins' lonely vesper-chime,
It breathed abroad the frugal note of Gray.

It fluttered here and there, nor swept in vain
The dusty haunts where futile echoes dwell,—
Then, in a cadence soft as summer rain,
And sad from Auburn voiceless, drooped and fell.

It drooped and fell, and one 'neath northern skies,
With southern heart, who tilled his father's field,
Found Poesy a-dying, bade her rise
And touch quick Nature's hem and go forth healed.

On life's broad plain the ploughman's conquering share
Upturned the fallow lands of truth anew,
And o'er the formal garden's trim parterre
The peasant's team a ruthless furrow drew.

Bright was his going forth, but clouds ere long
Whelmed him ; in gloom his radiance set, and those
Twin morning stars of the new century's song,
Those morning stars that sang together, rose.

In elvish speech the *Dreamer* told his tale
Of marvellous oceans swept by fateful wings.—
The *Seër* strayed not from earth's human pale,
But the mysterious face of common things

He mirrored as the moon in Rydal Mere
Is mirrored, when the breathless night hangs blue :
Strangely remote she seems and wondrous near,
And by some nameless difference born anew.

V

Peace—peace—and rest ! Ah, how the lyre is loth,
Or powerless now, to give what all men seek !
Either it deadens with ignoble sloth
Or deafens with shrill tumult, loudly weak.

Where is the singer whose large notes and clear
Can heal, and arm, and plenish, and sustain ?
Lo, one with empty music floods the ear,
And one, the heart refreshing, tires the brain.

And idly tuneful, the loquacious throng
Flutter and twitter, prodigal of time,
And little masters make a toy of song
Till grave men weary of the sound of rhyme.

And some go prankt in faded antique dress,
Abhorring to be hale and glad and free ;
And some parade a conscious naturalness,
The scholar's not the child's simplicity.

Enough ;—and wisest who from words forbear.
The gentle river rails not as it glides ;
And suave and charitable, the winsome air
Chides not at all, or only him who chides.

VI

Nature ! we storm thine ear with choric notes.
Thou answerest through the calm great nights and days,
“ Laud me who will : not tuneless are your throats ;
Yet if ye paused I should not miss the praise.”

We falter, half-rebuked, and sing again.
We chant thy desertness and haggard gloom,
Or with thy splendid wrath inflate the strain,
Or touch it with thy colour and perfume.

One, his melodious blood aflame for thee,
Wooed with fierce lust, his hot heart world-defiled.
One, with the upward eye of infancy,
Looked in thy face, and felt himself thy child.

Thee he approached without distrust or dread—
Beheld thee throned, an awesome queen, above—
Climbed to thy lap and merely laid his head
Against thy warm wild heart of mother-love.

He heard that vast heart beating—thou didst press
Thy child so close, and lov'dst him unaware.
Thy beauty gladdened him ; yet he scarce less
Had loved thee, had he never found thee fair !

For thou wast not as legendary lands
To which with curious eyes and ears we roam.
Nor wast thou as a fane 'mid solemn sands,
Where palmers halt at evening. Thou wast home.

And here, at home, still bides he ; but he sleeps ;
Not to be wakened even at thy word ;
Though we, vague dreamers, dream he somewhere keeps
An ear still open to thy voice still heard,—

Thy voice, as heretofore, about him blown,
For ever blown about his silence now ;
Thy voice, though deeper, yet so like his own
That almost, when he sang, we deemed 'twas thou !

VII

Behind Helm Crag and Silver Howe the sheen
Of the retreating day is less and less.
Soon will the lordlier summits, here unseen,
Gather the night about their nakedness.

The half-heard bleat of sheep comes from the hill.
Faint sounds of childish play are in the air.
The river murmurs past. All else is still.
The very graves seem stiller than they were.

Afar though nation be on nation hurled,
And life with toil and ancient pain depressed,
Here one may scarce believe the whole wide world
Is not at peace, and all man's heart at rest.

Rest ! 'twas the gift *he* gave ; and peace ! the shade
He spread, for spirits fevered with the sun
To him his bounties are come back—here laid
In rest, in peace, his labour nobly done.

1884-87.

TO MY ELDEST CHILD

MY little firstborn daughter sweet—
My child, yet half of alien race—
England and Ireland surely meet,
Their feuds forgotten, in thy face.

To both these lands I'd have thee give
Thy maiden heart, surrendered free ;
For both alike I'd have thee live,
Since both alike do live in thee.

In thee they lay their strife aside,
That were so worn with dire unrest ;
These whom the waters parted wide,
But who commingle in thy breast.

These would I teach thee to revere,
To love, and serve, and understand ;
Nor would I have thee hold less dear
Thy mother's than thy father's land.

The English fields, in sun and rain,
Were round about thee at thy birth ;
But thou shalt ache with Ireland's pain,
And thou shalt laugh with Ireland's mirth.

Thou shalt be taught her noble songs,
And thou shalt grieve whene'er is told
The story of her ancient wrongs,
The story of her sorrows old.

And often, in thy English home,
Her voice will call, and thou obey.
Thy heart will cross the sundering foam,
Thy soul to Ireland sail away.

Ah, little flower ! in Irish ground
Thy roots are deeper than the sea,
Though English woodlands murmured round
The house of thy nativity.

Of both these peoples thou wert born ;
Of both these lands thou art the child ;
Surely a symbol of the morn
That shall behold them reconciled.

THE THUNDERSHOWER

I

WE'LL home and take shelter,
While romps o'er the plain
Like a herd helter-skelter

The rioting rain.

For the thunderclouds blacken,

To drench, as they pass,

The deer in the bracken,

The kine in the grass.

II

It is gone. Let us follow.

The heavens breathe free.

Inhurst and in hollow

How glistens each tree !

And pure from the thunder

In sheen and in hue,

The world and its wonder

Are fashioned anew.

NATURE'S WAY

“ **F**AULTILY faultless ” may be ill—
“ Carefully careless ” is worse still.
I bought one day a book of rhyme—
One long, fierce flout at tune and time ;
Ragged and jagged by intent,
As if each line were earthquake-rent ;
Leagues on seismal leagues of it,
Not unheroically writ,
By one of whom I had been told
That he, in scorn of canons old,
Pedantic laws effete and dead,
Went fearless to the pure well-head
Of song’s most ancient legislature—
Art’s uncorrupted mother, Nature.

Nature ! whose lapidary seas
Labour a pebble without ease ;
Who never negligently yet
Fashioned an April violet,
Nor would forgive, did June disclose
Unceremoniously the rose ;
Who makes the toadstool in the grass
The carven ivory surpass,
So guiltless of a fault or slip
Is its victorious workmanship ;
Who suffers us pure Form to see
In a dead leaf’s anatomy ;

And pondering long where greenly sleep
The unravished secrets of the deep,
Bids the all-courted pearl express
Her final thoughts on flawlessness ;
But visibly aches when doomed to bring
Some inchoate amorphous thing
Into a world her curious wit
Would fain have shaped all-exquisite
As the acorn cup's simplicity,
Or the Moon's patience with the sea,
Or the superb, the golden grief
Of each October for each leaf,
Phrased in a rhetoric that excels
Isaiah's and Ezekiel's.

LINES READ BY THE AUTHOR AT THE
DICKENS CENTENARY CELEBRATION IN
NEW YORK

WHERE, where was born the man
Whom here we are met to praise ?
Was it among the multitudinous ways
Where his loved London lifts her fevered brow
For cooling Night to fan ?
Nay, but at Portsmouth on the embattled tides,
Where ships of war stept out with lofty prow
And heaved their stormy sides,
And where, far heard across the gaunt sea wall,
Rises through silence the long bugle-call,—
There was he born amid the forts and guns,
One of the greatest of Earth's fighting sons ;
There, in that place of arms and battle-gear,
Where all the proud sea babbled Nelson's name,
Into the world this later hero came,
He, too, a man that knew all moods but fear,
He, too, a Warrior.

Yet not his the strife
That leaves dark scars on the fair face of Life !
He fought to tie, fought not to hold apart,
The strings of the world's heart ;
And built a broad and noble bridge to span
The icy chasm that sunders man from man.
Wherever Wrong had fixed its bastions deep,
There did his fierce yet gay assault surprise
Some fortress girt with lucre or with lies ;

There his light onset stormed some ponderous keep ;
There charged he up the steep—
A knight on whom no palsying torpor fell,
Keen to the last to break a lance with Hell.
And still undimmed his conquering weapons shine ;
On his bright sword no spot of rust appears ;
And still, across the years,
His soul goes forth to battle, and in the face
Of whatsoe'er is false, or cruel, or base,
He hurls his gage, and leaps among the spears,
Being armed with pity and love, and scorn divine,
Immortal laughter, and immortal tears.

A RIDDLE OF THE THAMES

AT windows that from Westminster
Look southward to the Lollard's Tower,
She sat, my lovely friend. A blur
Of gilded mist,—('twas morn's first hour),—
Made vague the world : and in the gleam
Shivered the half-awakened stream.

Through tinted vapour looming large,
Ambiguous shapes obscurely rode.
She gazed where many a laden barge
Like a dim-moving saurian showed.
And 'midst them, lo ! two swans appeared,
And proudly up the river steered.

Two stately swans ! What did they there ?
Whence came they ? Whither would they go ?
Think of them,—things so faultless fair,—
'Mid the black shipping down below !
On through the rose and gold they passed,
And melted in the morn at last.

Ah, can it be, that they had come,
Where Thames in sullied glory flows,
Fugitive rebels, tired of some
Secluded lake's ornate repose,
Eager to taste the life that pours
Its muddier wave 'twixt mightier shores ?

We ne'er shall know : our wonderment
 No barren certitude shall mar.
They left behind them, as they went,
 A dream than knowledge ampler far ;
And from our world they sailed away
 Into some visionary day.

ON THE DEATH OF EDWARD VII

HONOUR the happy dead with sober praise,
Who living would have scorned the fulsome
phrase,
Meet for the languorous Orient's jewelled ear.
This was the *English* King, that loved the English ways !
A man not too remote, or too august,
For other mortal children of the dust
To know and to draw near.
Born with a nature that demanded joy,
He took full draughts of life, nor did the vintage cloy ;
But when she passed from vision, who so long
Had sat aloft—alone—
On the steep heights of an Imperial throne,
Then rose he large and strong,
Then spake his voice with new and grander tone,
Then, called to rule the State
Which he had only served,
He saw clear Duty plain, nor from that highway swerved,
And, unappalled by his majestic fate,
Pretended not to greatness, yet was great.

THE ETERNAL SEARCH

MY little maiden two years old, just able
To tower full half a head above the table,
With inquisition keen must needs explore
Whatever in my dwelling hath a door,
Whatever is behind a curtain hid,
Or lurks, a rich enigma, 'neath a lid.
So soon is the supreme desire confessed,
To probe the unknown ! So soon begins the quest,
That never ends until asunder fall
The locks and bolts of the last door of all.

1915.

HER THIRD BIRTHDAY

MY tiny lady, can it
Be true that you and I,
On something called a planet,
Are somewhere in the sky ?

Yes—and at such a tearing
And madcap speed we've spun,
That you, with dreadful daring,
Have thrice been round the sun.

Nay, it yet more amazes,
That my far-venturing girl
Can be as fresh as daisies
After so wild a whirl !

And now 'neath western billow
The sun is put to bed,
And you, too, on your pillow
Must lay a golden head.

Ah, tears—they come so quickly,
For grief so quickly gone !
Yet joys have rained as thickly,
For you to dream upon.

DAWN ON THE HEADLAND

DAWN—and a magical stillness: on earth,
quiescence profound;
On the waters a vast Content, as of hunger
 appeased and stayed;
In the heavens a silence that seems not mere privation of
 sound,
But a thing with form and body, a thing to be touched
 and weighed!

Yet I know that I dwell in the midst of the roar of the
 cosmic wheel,
In the hot collision of Forces, and clangour of bound-
 less Strife,
Mid the sound of the speed of the worlds, the rushing
 worlds, and the peal
Of the thunder of Life.

POWER AND CHARM

ACOT was ours, lone on a wooded fell
That gazed into a fairy Mere renowned.
Dark mountains on our right hand camped
around ;
Green, on our left, were copse and ferny dell.
Thus betwixt Power and Charm we abode ; and well
Loved we the brows of Power, with silence crowned ;
Yet many a time, when awsomely they frowned,
To Charm we turned, with Charm, with Charm to dwell.

So have I turned, when overbrooded long
By that great star-familiar peak austere,
My Milton's Sinai-Helicon divine,
To some far earthlier singer's earth-sweet song :
A song frail as the windflower, and as dear,
With no more purpose than the eglantine.

A DIZZYING SURMISE

WHAT if that fieriest Substance—found so late—
That cousin to the uranium of the sun—
Were proved a cause of all that we have done
And dreamed and been—a source of love and hate,
Virtue and valour, and beauty nobly great ?
What if all this, ere Nature had begun
Man's fashioning, lay closed and hidden in one
Miraculous God-sown seed of Life and Fate ?

Thus was the Genie of the Arabian tale
Sealed in a vial for a thousand years
Under the ocean, till a fisher's net
Drew forth the vial, and the fisher set
The captive free,—but shrank amazed and pale,
When the loosed Afreet towered against the Spheres.

1909.

THE MIGHTY DENIER

WELL he slumbers, greatly slain,
Who in splendid battle dies ;
Deep his sleep in midmost main
Pillowed upon pearl who lies.

Ease, of all good gifts the best,
War and wave at last decree ;
Love alone denies us rest,
Crueller than sword or sea.

THE GREAT MISGIVING

“**N**OT ours,’ say some, “ the thought of death
to dread ;
Asking no heaven, we fear no fabled hell :
Life is a feast, and we have banqueted—
Shall not the worms as well ?

“ The after-silence, when the feast is o’er,
And void the places where the minstrels stood,
Differs in nought from what hath been before,
And is nor ill nor good.”

Ah, but the Apparition—the dumb sign—
The beckoning finger bidding me forgo
The fellowship, the converse, and the wine,
The songs, the festal glow !

And ah, to know not, while with friends I sit,
And while the purple joy is passed about,
Whether ’tis ampler day divinelier lit
Or homeless night without ;

And whether, stepping forth, my soul shall see
New prospects, or fall sheer—a blinded thing !
There is, O grave, thy hourly victory,
And there, O death, thy sting.

HIS SPLENDID DEFECT

TWAS said the gods, when they Porphyrion slew,
And vast Enceladus under Etna laid,
Could conquer only with a mortal's aid
These mortal giants and their snakish crew.
Shelley, thou didst with radiant valour hew
At monsters old, but fought'st them with a blade
Too wholly of celestial metal made,
And lacking help of mere gross human thew.
Therefore thou didst prevail not ! For to quell
Earth's mightiest evil things 'tis not enough
To array against them things of heavenly birth.
Earthly auxiliaries thou need'st as well :
Earth-founded powers, and earth-forged weapons tough,
And breastplate hard as the iron breast of the earth.

ART'S RIDDLE

COME, friend, I also would her skein unravel.
Art is not Nature lost in man's control,
But Nature's reminiscences of travel
Across an artist soul.

Or 'tis a tidal river, that, each day,
Ebbing and flowing under cliff and tree,
With mutual and eternal interplay
Takes and gives back the sea.

CONFIDENCE

WHEN criticasters of a day
Seem to have sneered me quite away ;
When with a pontiff's frown
Some dabbler puts me down ;

When up from out the nursery start
Sages to teach me mine own art—
Guides in a land my share
Did plough before they were ;

When gusts of fashion brief as vain
Sow wide a tasteless taste inane ;
When Folly, morn by morn,
Scatters on me her scorn ;

Then, draining mine appointed cup,
In patience do I gird me up,
Trusting that Time, one day,
All his arrears will pay.

TELL ME NOT NOW

TELL me not now, if love for love
Thou canst return,—
Now while around us and above
Day's flambeaux burn.
Not in clear noon, with speech as clear,
Thy heart avow,
For every gossip wind to hear ;
Tell me not now !

Tell me not now the tidings sweet,
The news divine ;
A little longer at thy feet
Leave me to pine.
I would not have the gadding bird
Hear from his bough ;
Nay, though I famish for a word,
Tell me not now !

But when deep trances of delight
All Nature seal,
When round the world the arms of Night
Caressing steal,
When rose to dreaming rose says, “ *Dear,*
 Dearest,”—and when
Heaven sighs her secret in Earth's ear,
 Ah, tell me then !

TEMPEST

UNDER the dark and piny steep
We watched the storm crash by :
We saw the bright brand leap and leap
Out of the shattered sky.

The elements were minist'ring
To make one mortal blest ;
For, peal by peal, you did but cling
The closer to his breast.

THE VOICE FROM DREAMLAND

THY voice from inmost dreamland calls ;
The wastes of sleep thou makest fair ;
Bright o'er the ridge of darkness falls
The cataract of thy hair.

The morn renews its golden birth :
Thou with the vanquished night dost fade ;
And leav'st the ponderable earth
Less real than thy shade.

ODE IN MAY

LET me go forth, and share
The overflowing Sun
With one wise friend, or one
Better than wise, being fair,
Where the pewit wheels and dips
On heights of bracken and ling,
And Earth, unto her leaflet tips,
Tingles with the Spring.

What is so sweet and dear
As a prosperous morn in May,
The confident prime of the day,
And the dauntless youth of the year,
When nothing that asks for bliss,
Asking aright, is denied,
And half of the world a bridegroom is,
And half of the world a bride ?

The Song of Mingling flows,
Grave, ceremonial, pure,
As once, from lips that endure,
The cosmic descant rose,
When the temporal lord of life,
Going his golden way,
Had taken a wondrous maid to wife
That long had said him nay.

For of old the Sun, our sire,
Came wooing the mother of men,
Earth, that was virginal then,
Vestal fire to his fire.
Silent her bosom and coy,
But the strong god sued and pressed ;
And born of their starry nuptial joy
Are all that drink of her breast.

And the triumph of him that begot,
And the travail of her that bore,
Behold, they are evermore
As warp and weft in our lot.
We are children of splendour and flame,
Of shuddering, also, and tears.
Magnificent out of the dust we came,
And abject from the Spheres.

O bright irresistible lord,
We are fruit of Earth's womb, each one,
And fruit of thy love, O Sun,
For this thy spouse, thy adored.
To thee as our Father we bow,
Forbidden thy Father to see,
Who is older and greater than thou, as thou
Art greater and older than we.

Thou art but as a word of his speech,
Thou art but as a wave of his hand ;
Thou art brief as a glitter of sand
'Twixt tide and tide on his beach ;
Thou art less than a spark of his fire,
Or a moment's mood of his soul :
Thou art lost in the notes on the lips of his choir
That chant the chant of the Whole.

THE LOST EDEN

BUT yesterday was Man from Eden driven.
His dream, wherein he dreamed himself the first
Of creatures, fashioned for eternity—
This was the Eden that he shared with Eve.

Eve, the adventurous soul within his soul !
The sleepless, the unslaked ! She showed him where
Amidst his garden hung the bough whose fruit
Is disenchantment and the perishing
Of many glorious errors. And he saw
His paradise how narrow : and he saw,—
He, who had well-nigh deemed the world itself
Of less significance and majesty
Than his own part and business in it !—how
Little that part, and in how great a world.
And an imperative world-thirst drove him forth,
And the gold gates of Eden clanged behind.

Never shall he return : for he hath sent
His spirit abroad among the infinitudes,
And may no more to the ancient pales recall
The travelled feet. But oftentimes he feels
The intolerable vastness bow him down,
The awful homeless spaces daunt his soul ;
And half-regretful he remembers then
His Eden lost, as some grey mariner
May think of the far fields where he was bred,
And woody ways unbreathed-on by the sea,
Though more familiar now the ocean-paths
Gleam, and the stars his fathers never knew.

THE UNKNOWN GOD

WHEN, overarched by gorgeous night,
I wave my trivial self away ;
When all I was to all men's sight
Shares the erasure of the day ;
Then do I cast my cumbering load,
Then do I gain a sense of God.

Not him that with fantastic boasts
A sombre people dreamed they knew ;
The mere barbaric God of Hosts
That edged their sword and braced their thew :
A God they pitted 'gainst a swarm
Of neighbour Gods less vast of arm ;

A God like some imperious king,
Wroth, were his realm not duly awed ;
A God for ever hearkening
Unto his self-commanded laud ;
A God for ever jealous grown
Of carven wood and graven stone ;

A God whose ghost, in arch and aisle,
Still haunts his temple—and his tomb ;
But follows in a little while
Odin and Zeus to equal doom ;
A God of kindred seed and line ;
Man's giant shadow, hailed divine.

O streaming worlds, O crowded sky,
O Life, and mine own soul's abyss,
Myself am scarce so small that I
Should bow to Deity such as this !
This my Begetter ? This was what
Man in his violent youth begot.

The God I know of, I shall ne'er
Know, though he dwells exceeding nigh.
Raise thou the stone and find me there,
Cleave thou the wood and there am I.
Yea, in my flesh his spirit doth flow,
Too near, too far, for me to know.

Whate'er my deeds, I am not sure
That I can pleasure him or vex :
I that must use a speech so poor
It narrows the Supreme with sex.
Notes he the good or ill in man ?
To hope he cares is all I can.

I hope—with fear. For did I trust
This vision granted me at birth,
The sire of heaven would seem less just
Than many a faulty son of earth.
And so he seems indeed ! But then,
I trust it not, this bounded ken.

And dreaming much, I never dare
To dream that in my prisoned soul
The flutter of a trembling prayer
Can move the Mind that is the Whole.
Though kneeling nations watch and yearn,
Does the primordial purpose turn ?

Best by remembering God, say some,
We keep our high imperial lot.
Fortune, I fear, hath oftenest come
When we forgot—when we forgot !
A lovelier faith their happier crown,
But history laughs and weeps it down !

Know they not well, how seven times seven,
Wronging our mighty arms with rust,
We dared not do the work of heaven
Lest heaven should hurl us in the dust ?
The work of heaven ! 'Tis waiting still
The sanction of the heavenly will.

Unmeet to be profaned by praise
Is he whose coils the world enfold ;
The God on whom I ever gaze,
The God I never once behold :
Above the cloud, beneath the clod :
The Unknown God, the Unknown God.

ENGLAND AND HER COLONIES

SHE stands a thousand-wintered tree,
By countless morns impeared ;
Her broad roots coil beneath the sea,
Her branches sweep the world ;
Her seeds, by careless winds conveyed,
Clothe the remotest strand
With forests from her scatterings made,
New nations fostered in her shade,
And linking land with land.

O ye by wandering tempest sown
'Neath every alien star,
Forget not whence the breath was blown
That wafted you afar !
For ye are still her ancient seed
On younger soil let fall—
Children of Britain's island-breed,
To whom the Mother in her need
Perchance may one day call.

1890.

ALPHA AND OMEGA

HE throned her in the gateways of the world,
He 'stablished her on high before the
peoples.

He raised her as a watch-tower from the wave,
He built her as a lighthouse on the waters.

He maketh and unmaketh without end,
And He alone, who is First and Last, shall judge her.

1903.

HYMN TO THE SEA*

I

GRANT, O regal in bounty, a subtle and delicate largess ;
Grant an ethereal alms, out of the wealth of thy soul :

Suffer a tarrying minstrel, who finds, not fashions his numbers,—

Who, from the commune of air, cages the volatile song,—
Lightly to capture and prison some fugitive breath of thy descendant,

Thine and his own as thy roar lisped on the lips of a shell,

Now while the vernal impulsion makes lyrical all that hath language,

While, through the veins of the Earth, riots the ichor of spring,

While, amid throes, amid raptures, with loosing of bonds, with unsealings,—

Arrowy pangs of delight, piercing the core of the world,—

Tremors and coy unfoldings, reluctances, sweet agitations,—

Youth, irrepressibly fair, wakes like a wondering rose.

* In this poem the elegiac metre is obviously and of necessity accentual, not quantitative. Tried by classical rules that are altogether inapplicable to our poetry it would of course sink under the ordeal.

Lover whose vehement kisses on lips irresponsive are squandered,

Lover that wooest in vain Earth's imperturbable heart ;
Athlete mightily frustrate, who pittest thy thews against legions,

Locked with fantastical hosts, bodiless arms of the sky ;
Sea that breakest for ever, that breakest and never art broken,

Like unto thine, from of old, springeth the spirit of man,—

Nature's wooer and fighter, whose years are a suit and a wrestling,

All their hours, from his birth, hot with desire and with fray ;

Amorist agonist man, that, immortally pining and striving,
Snatches the glory of life only from love and from war ;
Man that, rejoicing in conflict, like thee when precipitate tempest,

Charge after thundering charge, clangs on thy resonant mail,

Seemeth so easy to shatter, and proveth so hard to be cloven ;

Man whom the gods, in his pain, curse with a soul that endures ;

Man whose deeds, to the doer, come back as thine own exhalations

Into thy bosom return, weepings of mountain and vale ;
Man with the cosmic fortunes and starry vicissitudes tangled,

Chained to the wheel of the world, blind with the dust
of its speed,
Even as thou, O giant, whom trailed in the wake of her
conquests
Night's sweet despot draws, bound to her ivory car ;
Man with inviolate caverns, impregnable holds in his
nature,
Depths no storm can pierce, pierced with a shaft of the
sun :
Man that is galled with his confines, and burdened yet
more with his vastness,
Born too great for his ends, never at peace with his
goal ;
Man whom Fate, his victor, magnanimous, clement in
triumph,
Holds as a captive king, mewed in a palace divine :
Many its leagues of pleasance, and ample of purview its
windows ;
Airily falls, in its courts, laughter of fountains at play ;
Nought, when the harpers are harping, untimely reminds
him of durance ;
None, as he sits at the feast, utters Captivity's name ;
But, would he parley with Silence, withdraw for a while
unattended,
Forth to the beckoning world 'scape for an hour and be
free,
Lo, his adventurous fancy coercing at once and provoking,
Rise the unscalable walls, built with a word at the prime;
Lo, in unslumbering watch, and with pitiless faces of iron,
Armed at each obstinate gate, stand the impassable
guards.

III

Miser whose coffered recesses the spoils of the ages
cumber,
Spendthrift foaming thy soul wildly in fury away,—
We, self-amorous mortals, our own multitudinous image
Seeking in all we behold, seek it and find it in thee :
Seek it and find it when o'er us the exquisite fabric of
Silence

Perilous-turreted hangs, trembles and dulcetly falls ;
When the aërial armies engage amid orgies of music,
Braying of arrogant brass, whimper of querulous reeds;
When, at his banquet, the Summer is languid and drowsed
with repletion ;
When, to his anchorite board, taciturn Winter repairs ;
When by the tempest are scattered magnificent ashes of
Autumn ;
When, upon orchard and lane, breaks the white foam
of the Spring :
When, in extravagant revel, the Dawn, a bacchante up-
leaping,
Spills, on the tresses of Night, vintages golden and red;
When, as a token at parting, munificent Day, for remem-
brance,
Gives, unto men that forget, Ophirs of fabulous ore ;
When, irresistibly rushing, in luminous palpitant deluge,
Hot from the summits of Life, poured is the lava of
noon ;
When, as up yonder, thy mistress, at height of her
mutable glories,
Wise from the magical East, comes like a sorceress pale.

Ah, she comes, she arises,—impassive, emotionless, bloodless,

Wasted and ashen of cheek, zoning her ruins with pearl.
Once she was warm, she was joyous, desire in her pulses
abounding :

Surely thou lovedst her well, then, in her conquering
youth !

Surely not all unimpassioned, at sound of thy rough
serenading,

She, from the balconied night, unto her melodist
leaned,—

Leaned unto thee, her bondsman, who keepest to-day her
commandments,

All for the sake of old love, dead at thy heart though it
lie.

IV

Yea, it is we, light perverts, that waver, and shift our
allegiance ;

We, whom insurgence of blood dooms to be barren and
waste.

Thou, with punctual service, fulfillest thy task, being
constant ;

Thine but to ponder the Law, labour and greatly obey :
Wherefore, with leapings of spirit, thou chantest the
chant of the faithful ;

Led by the chime of the worlds, linked with the league
of the stars ;

Thou thyself but a billow, a ripple, a drop of that Ocean,
Which, labyrinthine of arm, folding us meshed in its
coil,

Shall, as to-night, with elations, august exultations and
ardours,
Pour, in unfaltering tide, all its unanimous waves,
When, from this threshold of being, these steps of the
Presence, this precinct,
Into the matrix of Life darkly divinely resumed,
Man and his littleness perish, erased like an error and
cancelled,
Man and his greatness survive, lost in the greatness of
God.

APOLOGIA

(1895).

THUS much I know: what dues soe'er be mine,
Of fame or of oblivion, Time the just,
Punctiliously assessing, shall award.

This have I doubted never; this is sure.
But one meanwhile shall chide me,—one shall curl
Superior lips,—because my handiwork,
The issue of my solitary toil,
The harvest of my spirit, even these
My numbers, are not something, good or ill,
Other than I have ever striven, in years
Lit by a conscious and a patient aim,
With hopes and with despairs, to fashion them;
Or, it may be, because I have full oft
In singers' selves found me a theme of song,
Holding these also to be very part
Of Nature's greatness, and accounting not
Their descant least heroical of deeds;
Or, yet again, because I bring nought new,
Save as each noontide or each Spring is new,
Into an old and iterative world,
And can but proffer unto whoso will
A cool and nowise turbid cup, from wells
Our fathers digged; and have not thought it shame
To tread in nobler footprints than mine own,
And travel by the light of purer eyes.
Ev'n such offences am I charged withal,
Till, breaking silence, I am moved to cry,

What would ye, then, my masters ? Is the Muse
Fall'n to a thing of Mode, that must each year
Supplant her derelict self of yester-year ?
Or do the mighty voices of old days
At last so tedious grow, that one whose lips
Inherit some far echo of their tones—
How far, how faint, none better knows than he
Who hath been nourished on their utterance—can
But irk the ears of such as care no more
The accent of dead greatness to recall ?
If, with an ape's ambition, I rehearse
Their gestures, trick me in their stolen robes,
The sorry mime of their nobility,
Dishonouring whom I vainly emulate,
The poor imposture soon shall shrink revealed
In the ill grace with which their gems bestar
An abject brow : but if I be indeed
Their true descendant, as the veriest hind
May yet be sprung of kings, their lineaments
Will out, the signature of ancestry
Leap unobscured, and somewhat of themselves
In me, their lowly scion, live once more.
With grateful, not vainglorious joy, I dreamed
It did so live ; and ev'n such pride was mine
As is next neighbour to humility.
For he that claims high lineage yet may feel
How thinned in the transmission is become
The ancient blood he boasts ; how slight he stands
In the great shade of his majestic sires.
But it was mine endeavour so to sing
As if these lofty ones a moment stooped

From their still spheres, and undisdainful graced
My note with audience, nor incurious heard
Whether, degenerate irredeemably,
The faltering minstrel shamed his starry kin.
And though I be to these but as a knoll
About the feet of the high mountains, scarce
Remarked at all save when a valley cloud
Holds the high mountains hidden, and the knoll
Against the cloud shows briefly eminent ;
Yet ev'n as they, I too, with constant heart,
And with no light or careless ministry,
Have served what seemed the Voice ; and unprofane,
Have dedicated to melodious ends
All of myself that least ignoble was.
For though of faulty and of erring walk,
I have not suffered aught in me of frail
To blur my song ; I have not paid the world
The evil and the insolent courtesy
Of offering it my baseness for a gift.
And unto such as think all Art is cold,
All music unimpassioned, if it breathe
An ardour not of Eros' lips, and glow
With fire not caught from Aphrodite's breast,
Be it enough to say, that in Man's life
Is room for great emotions unbegot
Of dalliance and embracement, unbegot
Ev'n of the purer nuptials of the soul ;
And one not pale of blood, to human touch
Not tardily responsive, yet may know
A deeper transport and a mightier thrill
Than comes of commerce with mortality,

When, rapt from all relation with his kind,
All temporal and immediate circumstance,
In silence, in the visionary mood
That, flashing light on the dark deep, perceives
Order beyond this coil and errancy,
Isled from the fretful hour he stands alone
And hears the eternal movement, and beholds
Above him and around and at his feet,
In million-billowed consentaneousness,
The flowing, flowing, flowing of the world.

Such moments, are they not the peaks of life ?
Enough for me, if on these pages fall
The shadow of the summits, and an air
Not dim from human hearth-fires sometimes blow.

THE PROTEST

BID me no more to other eyes
With wandering worship fare,
And weave my numbers garland-wise
To crown another's hair.
On me no more a mandate lay
Thou wouldest not have me to obey !

Bid me no more to leave unkissed
That rose-wreathed porch of pearl.
Shall I, where'er the winds may list,
Give them my life to whirl ?
Perchance too late thou wilt be fain
Thy exile to recall—in vain.

Bid me no more from thee depart,
For in thy voice to-day
I hear the tremor of thy heart
Entreating me to stay ;
I hear . . . nay, silence tells it best,
O yielded lips, O captive breast !

RETROGRESSION

OUR daughters flower in vernal grace ;
In strength our striplings wax apace ;
Our cities teem ; our commerce rides
Sovereign upon the fawning tides.
But while, to this our stronghold—where
The North Wind's wandering children fair,
Like wild birds from the waters sprung,
Built their wild nest and reared their young—
The fleets of peace for ever pour
Fruitage and vintage, gems and ore ;
While here, within each ocean gate,
Long barricadoed against Fate,
We are served by all the alien seas,
And fed from the Antipodes,
Lo, everywhere the unplenished brain !
Everywhere, dire as bondman's chain,
Or laws that crush, or creeds that blind,—
The leanness of the unnourished mind.

For few and fewer do they grow,
Who know, or ever cared to know,
The great things greatly said and sung
In this heroic English tongue,
This speech that is the rough-wrought key
To palaces of wizardry,
Our fathers' glory, and our despair ;
And many a fabric hung in air,
That firmer stands than boastful stone ;

And many a tower of vigil lone,
Climbing whose stairway Wisdom viewed
The labyrinth of infinitude.

And shouldst thou have in thee to-day
Aught thou canst better sing than say,
Shun, if thou wouldst by men be heard,
The comely phrase, the wellborn word,
And use, as for their ears more meet,
The unlovely lingo of the street,
A language Milton's kin have long
Accounted good enough for song.
Or don that vesture not less vile,
The beaded and bespangled style—
Diction o'erloaded and impure,
Thy thought lost in its garniture,
Thy Muse, ev'n to her raiment's hem,
Huddling uncostly gem on gem,
Striving her lax form to bestar
With all crude ornaments that are :
An empty and a dreary strife,
Vulgar in Letters as in Life.

Nor look for praise, save here and there
From a fast-dwindling remnant rare,
If thou beget with happy pain
The ordered and the governed strain
That peradventure had not shamed
Masters felicitously famed ;
Dryden, the athlete large and strong,
Lord of the nerve and sinew of song ;

A hewer and shaper who could see,
In adamant, plasticity ;
Who tore from the entrails of the mine
The metal of his iron line ;
Who, born beside the haughty tomb
Of that rank time of overbloom
When poets vied in gathering each
Full-bosomed apple and buxom peach
That odorous in the orchard burned,
Had, from their purple surfeit, learned
The truth in Hellas seen so plain,
That the art of arts is to refrain ;—
Or Gray, who on worn thoughts conferred
That second youth, the perfect word,
The elected and predestined phrase
That had lain bound, long nights and days,
To wear at last, when once set free,
Immortal pellucidity ;
And who, in that most mighty Ode,
That like a pageant streamed and glowed,
Called up anew mid breathing things
The great ghosts of our tragic Kings,
With doom-dark brows to come and go,
Trailing the folds of gorgeous woe.

THE MOSSGROWN PORCHES

WHEN, as of old in Rome's imperial world,
Fair, conquered gods are from their temples
hurled,

And some rude, vehement Peter puts to flight
Some serene Phœbus, lord of lore and light ;
In wastes and wilds, by fount and caverned hill,
Secretly, furtively, are worshipped still,
With the sad zeal of vainly pious knees,
The ancient, the deposed divinities,
Heaven's outcasts, the great exiles of the sky,
Once mighty to do all things, save to die.

So, though in Kingdoms of the Lyre to-day
I see the new faiths push the old away—
See the hot hierophants of each strange shrine
Offer oblation to all gods but mine—
Yet, mid a revel of change, unchanged I turn
To the lorn haunts where older altars burn,
And seek, companioned by the lessening few
Whose faith is as mine own, the gods I knew ;
Nor ever doubt, that among wondering men
These deathless will in triumph come again,
As sure as the droop'd year's remounting curve,
And reign anew, when I no more shall serve.

MASTERY

GUARD me and save me, Muse, I pray,
From all who babble night and day
The doctrine that Intention high
Lifts Unachievement to the sky,
And that a mighty Will to sing
Makes the mere Power a needless thing !
Trench me around from such as prate
That only he who fails is great.

O, the brave tourneys of the Lyre
Are won by *prowess*, not desire,
And Art is *capture*, not pursuit—
Capture and conquest absolute,
Bliss of possession without bar.
And they the trophied hunters are,
Who from their cloudless brows efface
The last motes of the dust of chase,
Ev'n as great Victors let us see
Nought in their eyes save Victory.

The steeds of Helios will obey
None other than the lord of day.
They bear, delighted, the command
Of his inexorable hand ;
But if a meddler take the reins,
They rear, they toss their flaming manes,
Crash backward, or ramp wild anon,
In boundless scorn of Phaëthon.

DISCLOSURE

BY western shores we sojourned, where,
Watching a hill that watched the wave,
We called him dull in pose and air,
A bulk not grand but merely grave ;
So many mountains had we seen,
Lordly of carriage, kingly of mien.

Then came a snowstorm in the night,
And all his ribs of rock, next morn,
All his anatomy, sprang to light,
With form and feature, carved and worn,
That rose out of the sea's abyss
Magnificent in emphasis.

Imagine not that thou canst know
Mountains or men in very truth,
Until the tempest and the snow
Strike them at midnight without ruth,
And publish clear, in morning's gaze,
The lineaments they strove to erase.

EDENHUNGER

O THAT a nest, my mate ! were once more ours,
Where we, by vain and barren change
untortured,
Could have grave friendships with wise trees and
flowers,
And live the great, green life of field and orchard !

From the cold birthday of the daffodils,
Ev'n to that listening pause that is November,
O to confide in woods, confer with hills,
And then—then, to that palmland you remember,

Fly swift, where seas that brook not Winter's rule
Are one vast violet breaking into lilies :
There where we spent our first strange wedded Yule,
Far in the golden, fire-hearted Antilles.

PART OF MY STORY

WE met when you were in the May of life,
And I had left its June behind me far.
Some barren victories,—much defeat and
strife,—
Had marked my soul with many a hidden scar.

I was a man hurt deep with blows that men
Ne'er guessed at; strangely weak—more strangely
strong;
Daring at times; and uttering, now and then,
Out of a turbid heart a limpid song.

Fitful in effort,—fixed and clear in aim;
Poor, but not envious of the wealth I lack;
Ever half-scaling the hard hill of fame,
And ever by some evil fate flung back,—

Such did you find me, in that city grey
Where we were plighted, O my comrade true:
My wife, now dearer far than on the day
When this our love was new.

TO A PRIVILEGED THIEF

BLACKBIRD, that in our garden, here and there
 Nibbling an apple or pear,
Hast marred so many, and slaked thyself on none—
If thou wouldest come and eat thy fill of *one*
Instead of ruining twenty,
Were it not kindlier done ?
Thou still wouldest have thy share
Of this our plenty,
This ruddy issue of the earth and sun.

But ah, thou dost for thine exemplar take
The loveless rake,
The shallow libertine,
Who wanders among maidens, leaving each
Like a peck'd apple or a bitten peach,
For other palates spoiled ; nor dares to win
One heart in rich completeness,
And banquet, all his days, on its upyielded sweetness.

THE FISHER

THE Fisher is a warrior :
His camp is on the foam.
And he returns from victory,
Bringing his captives home.

Home he brings his captives,
Beauteous to behold,
Some in silver armour,
Some in mail of gold.

A brief truce, and to-morrow
Again the chanceful field !—
Where the burnished legions all night long
Have glimmered, and flashed, and wheeled.

AUTUMN

THOU burden of all songs the earth hath sung,
Thou retrospect in Time's reverted eyes,
Thou metaphor of everything that dies,
That dies ill-starred, or dies beloved and young
And therefore blest and wise,—
O be less beautiful, or be less brief,
Thou tragic splendour, strange, and full of fear !
In vain her pageant shall the Summer rear ?
At thy mute signal, leaf by golden leaf,
Crumbles the gorgeous year.

Ah, ghostly as remembered mirth, the tale
Of Summer's bloom, the legend of the Spring !
And thou, too, flutterest an impatient wing,
Thou presence yet more fugitive and frail,
Thou most unbodied thing,
Whose very being is thy going hence,
And passage and departure all thy theme ;
Whose life doth still a splendid dying seem,
And thou at height of thy magnificence
A figment and a dream.

Stilled is the virgin rapture that was June,
And cold is August's panting heart of fire ;
And in the storm-dismantled forest-choir
For thine own elegy thy winds attune
Their wild and wizard lyre :

And poignant grows the charm of thy decay,
The pathos of thy beauty, and the sting,
Thou parable of greatness vanishing !
For me, thy woods of gold and skies of grey
With speech fantastic ring.

For me, to dreams resigned, there come and go,
"Twixt mountains draped and hooded night and morn,
Elusive notes in wandering wafture borne,
From undiscoverable lips that blow
An immaterial horn ;
And spectral seem thy winter-boding trees,
Thy ruinous bowers and drifted foliage wet—
O Past and Future in sad bridal met,
O voice of everything that perishes,
And soul of all regret !

AN INSCRIPTION AT WINDERMERE

GUEST of this fair abode, before thee rise
No summits vast, that icily remote
Cannot forget their own magnificence
Or once put off their kinghood ; but withal
A confraternity of stateliest brows,
As Alp or Atlas noble, in port and mien ;
Old majesties, that on their secular seats
Enthroned, are yet of affable access
And easy audience, not too great for praise,
Not arrogantly aloof from thy concerns,
Not vaunting their indifference to thy fate,
Nor so august as to contemn thy love.
Do homage to these suavely eminent ;
But privy to their bosoms wouldest thou be,
There is a vale, whose seaward-parted lips
Murmur eternally some half-divulged
Reluctant secret, where thou may'st o'erhear
The mountains interchange their confidences,
Peak with his federate peak, that think aloud
Their broad and lucid thoughts, in liberal day :
Thither repair alone : the mountain heart
Not two may enter : thence returning, tell
What thou hast heard ; and 'mid the immortal friends
Of mortals, the selectest fellowship
Of poets divine, place shall be found for thee.

A TRIAL OF ORTHODOXY*

THE clinging children at their mother's knee
Slain ; and the sire and kindred one by one
Flayed or hewn piecemeal ; and things nameless
done,

Not to be told : while imperturbably
The nations gaze, where Rhine unto the sea,
Where Volga and Danube, Thames and Tiber run,
And where great armies glitter in the sun,
And great kings rule, and man is boasted free !
What wonder if yon torn and naked throng
Should doubt a Heaven that seems to wink and nod,
And having moaned at noontide, " Lord, how long ? "
Should cry, " Where hidest Thou ? " at evenfall,
At midnight, " Is He deaf and blind, our God ? "
And ere day dawn, " Is He indeed at all ? "

* From "The Purple East," a series of sonnets on the massacres under Abdul Hamid II.

EUROPE AT THE PLAY

(1896)

O LANGUID audience, met to see
The last act of the tragedy
On that terrific stage afar,
Where burning towns the footlights are,—
O listless Europe, day by day
Callously sitting out the play !

So sat, with loveless count’nce cold,
Round the arena, Rome of old.
Pain, and the ebb of life’s red tide,
So, with a calm regard, she eyed,
Her gorgeous vesture, million-pearled,
Splashed with the blood of half the world.
High was her glory’s noon : as yet
She had not dreamed her sun could set !
As yet she had not dreamed how soon
Shadows should vex her glory’s noon.
Another’s pangs she counted nought ;
Of human hearts she took no thought ;
But God, at nightfall, in her ear
Thundered *His* thought exceeding clear.

Perchance in tempest and in blight,
On Europe, too, shall fall the night !
She sees the victim overborne,
By worse than ravening lions torn.

She sees, she hears, with soul unstirred,
And lifts no hand, and speaks no word,
But vaunts a brow like theirs who deem
Men's wrongs a phrase, men's rights a dream.
Yet haply she shall learn, too late,
In some blind hurricane of Fate,
How fierily alive the things
She held as fool's imaginings,
And, though circuitous and obscure,
The feet of Nemesis how sure.

THE DEATHLESS BLACKSMITH

TIS the Tamer of Iron,
Who smites from the prime,
And the clang of whose smiting
Hath thundered through time.

In a Splendour of Darkness
Encaverned he stands,
Amid Pow'rs, amid Terrors,
The slaves of his hands.

Is he human and mortal,
With frailties like mine,
Or a demigod rather,
Of lineage divine ?

For the feared things and ruthless
Grow meek in his gaze :
The Fire doth his bidding :
The Iron obeys.

He is kin to the Great One
Whose furnaces roared
As he wrought with enchantments
The shield and the sword.

“ Whatsoever is mighty,”
He sings in his glee,
“ ’Twixt Hammer and Anvil
Is fashioned by me.”

· And he smites with the fierceness
 And moulds with the joy
Of the Gods that for pastime
 Create and destroy :

The Gods at whose signal
 The fuel was hurled
On the fires of the forges
 Where shaped is the world.

FRANCE*

LIGHT-HEARTED heroine of tragic story !
Nation whom storm on storm of ruining fate
Unruined leaves,—nay, fairer, more elate,
Hungrier for action, more athirst for glory !
World-witching queen, from fiery floods and gory
Rising eternally regenerate,
Clothed with great deeds and crowned with dreams
more great,
Spacious as Fancy's boundless territory !
Little thou lov'st our island, and perchance
Thou heed'st as little her reluctant praise ;
Yet let her, in these dark and bodeful days,
Sinking old hatreds 'neath the sundering brine,
Immortal and indomitable France,
Marry her tears, her alien tears, to thine.

* 25th June, 1894, the day after the murder of President Carnot.

SONG
THE WARRIOR LOVER

WHEN War's red tempest shall depart,
That long hath sundered me
From those sweet precincts of thy heart
And all that heaven of thee ;
If I return from where they rest
Whom battle's scythe hath mown,
Then in the fragrance of thy breast
I'll live for love alone.

But if, where warstorms wildest roll,
My life for *her* I yield—
That other empress of my soul,
Who called me to the field—
Though 'twixt you twain, with dying breath,
My homage I'll divide,
My heart will turn to thee in death,
To claim and clasp its bride.

1917

THE HOPE OF THE WORLD

I

HIGHER than heaven they sit,
Life and her consort Law ;
And one whose countenance lit
In mine more perfect awe,
Fain had I deemed their peer,
Beside them throned above :
Ev'n him who casts out fear,
Unconquerable Love.

Ah, 'twas on earth alone that I his beauty saw.

II

On earth, in homes of men,
In hearts that crave and die !
Dwells he not also, then,
With Godhead, throned on high ?
This and but this I know :
His face I see not there :
Here find I him below,
Nor find him otherwhere ;
Born of an aching world, Pain's bridegroom, Death's ally.

III

Did Heaven vouchsafe some sign
That through all Nature's frame
Boundless ascent benign
Is everywhere her aim,

Such as man hopes it here,
Where he from beasts hath risen,—
Then might I read full clear,
Ev'n in my sensual prison,
That Life and Law and Love are one symphonious name.

IV

Such sign hath Heaven yet lent ?
Nay, on this earth, are we
So sure 'tis real ascent
And very gain we see ?
'Gainst Evil striving still,
Some spoils of war we wrest :
Not to discover Ill
Were haply state as blest.
We vaunt, o'er doubtful foes, a dubious victory.

V

In cave and bosky dene
Of old there crept and ran
The gibbering form obscene
That was and was not man.
The desert beasts went by
In fairer covering clad ;
More speculative eye
The couchant lion had,
And goodlier speech the birds, than we when we began.

VI

Was it some random throw
Of heedless Nature's die,
That from estate so low
Uplifted man so high ?
Through untold æons vast
She let him lurk and cower :
'Twould seem he climbed at last
In mere fortuitous hour,
Child of a thousand chances 'neath the indifferent sky.

VII

A soul so long deferred
In his blind brain he bore,
It might have slept unstirred
Ten million noontides more.
Yea, round him Darkness might
Till now her folds have drawn,
O'er that enormous night
So casual came the dawn,
Such hues of hap and hazard Man's Emergence wore !

VIII

If, then, our rise from gloom
Hath this capricious air,
What ground is mine to assume
An upward process *there*,

In yonder worlds that shine
From alien tracts of sky ?
Nor ground to assume is mine
Nor warrant to deny.
Equal, my source of hope, my reason for despair.

IX

And though within me here
Hope lingers unsubdued,
'Tis because airiest cheer
Suffices for her food !
As some adventurous flower,
On savage crag-side grown,
Seems nourished hour by hour
From its wild self alone,
So lives inveterate Hope, on her own hardihood.

X

She tells me, whispering low :
“ Wherefore and whence thou wast,
Thou shalt behold and know,
When the Great Bridge is crossed.
For not in mockery He
Thy gift of wondering gave,
Nor bade thine answer be
The blank stare of the grave.
Thou shalt behold and know ; and find again thy lost.”

XI

With rapt eyes fixed afar,
She tells me : " Throughout Space,
Godward each peopled star
Runs with thy Earth a race.
Wouldst have the goal so nigh,
The course so smooth a field,
That Triumph should thereby
One half its glory yield ?
And can Life's pyramid soar all apex and no base ? "

XII

She saith : " Old dragons lie
In bowers of pleasance curled ;
And dost thou ask me why ?
It is a Wizard's world !
Enchanted princes these,
Who yet their scales shall cast,
And through his sorceries
Die into kings at last.
Ambushed in Winter's heart the rose of June is furled. "

XIII

Such are the tales she tells :
Who trusts, the happier he :
But nought of *virtue* dwells
In that felicity !

I think the harder feat
Were his who should *withstand*
A voice so passing sweet,
And so profuse a hand.—
Hope, I forgo the wealth thou fling'st abroad so free !

XIV

Carry thy largess hence,
Light Giver ! Let me learn
To abjure the opulence
I have done nought to earn ;
And on this world no more
To cast ignoble slight,
Counting it but the door
Of other worlds more bright.
Here, where I fail or conquer, here is my concern :

XV

Here, where perhaps alone
I conquer or I fail.
Here, o'er the dark Deep blown,
I ask no perfumed gale ;
I ask the unpampering breath
That fits me to endure
Chance, and victorious Death,
Life, and my doom obscure,
Who know not whence I am sped, nor to what port I sail.

WHITHER AFAR ?

IN light, in night, in twilight,
I sought for very Thee !
But *my* light, was it *Thy* light ?
I sought, and nought could see.

I strove by inward eyesight
To gaze on things to be :
But *my* sight, was it *Thy* sight ?
I gazed, and nought could see.

Along Thy starlit highway
Thou lead'st me, bound or free !
If *my* way, then, be *Thy* way,
O whither lead'st Thou me ?

AT A BURIAL

LORD of all Light and Darkness,
Lord of all Life and Death,
Behold, we lay in earth to-day
The flesh that perisheth.
Take to Thyself whatever may
Be not as dust and breath—
Lord of all Light and Darkness,
Lord of all Life and Death.

VERSES TO HENRY C. MONTGOMERY,
OF BALLYHACKAMORE

Written near Windermere, at Christmas, 1917.

GOOD friend and true, who, for the gifts and
knowledge
That stead you well amid the clang and strife,
Are less in debt to yonder younger College
Than to the University of Life.

Take, at this time that opens the heart's fountains,
Take, at this Yuletide, from across the seas,
The greetings of the meres and of the mountains,
And of your friends who are the guests of these.

Nay, ere my rhyme, that must not halt or tarry,
Flits through the snowstorm like a battered dove,
My little firstborn daughter bids it carry,
To her big, bearded playfellow, her love.

Wild roars the blizzard. Wilder tempest rages
In Man's fierce breast, and hides from the world's eyes
The truthtellers and lightgivers and sages
That live when hatred and when fury dies.

In this ill day, what good wish shall I send you ?
Vain, when our fate yet hangs in quivering doubt,
To ask that all felicity attend you,
And bid you to forget the woe without !

I can but pray that in some happier morrow,
 You, and we also, gazing from afar,
May look back on this vast, life-blinding sorrow
 As on the occultation of a star,—

A fixed star, briefly hidden by the passing
 Of a reposeless orb of bloodred glow :
Then bursting forth, where Night's bright hosts were
 massing,
To pour its glory undimmed, as long ago.

THE SAPPERS AND MINERS

IN lands that still the heirs of Othman sway,
There lives a legend, wild as wildest note
Of birds that haunt the Arabian waste, where rolls
Tigris through Baghdad to the Persian Sea.
'Tis fabled that the mighty sorcerer,
King Solomon, when he died, was sitting aloft,
Like one that mused, on his great lion-throne ;
Sitting with head bent forward o'er his staff,
Whereon with both his hands he leaned. And tribes
And peoples moved before him, in their awe
Not venturing nigh ; and tawny fiercenesses,
Panther and pard, at timorous distance couched ;
While Figures vast, Forms indeterminate,
Demons and Genii, the Enchanter's thralls,
Cloudily rose, and darkly went and came.
But so majestic sat he lifeless there,
And counterfeited life so perfectly,
That change of hue or feature was by none
Seen, and none guessed him dead, and every knee
Rendered him wonted homage, until worms
Gnawing his staff, made fall that last support,
And with it fell the unpropped Death, divulged
In gorgeous raiment to the wondering world.

So may an Empire, from whose body and limbs
The spirit hath wholly fled, still seem to breathe
And feel, still keep its living posture, still
Cheat with similitude of glory and power
The gazing Earth, until the evil things

That burrow in secret, and by night destroy,
Unseat the grandiose Semblance, and man's heart
Hastes to forget the obeisances he made
To a jewelled corse, long ripe for sepulture.

ON A PORTRAIT

A HEAD uplifted in noble grace
From stately shoulders and neck bepearled ;
And a countenance full of her soul—the face
Of one of the women that sweeten the world !

Ah, riches are hers, and titles splendid,
But what would she be if in dust they were hurled ?
She would still be as now—what God intended—
One of the women that sweeten the world.

VERSES TO THE DUCHESS OF HAMILTON

[AFTER THE DEATH OF ADMIRAL LORD FISHER]

AT your Dungavel, solitary and high,
That looks o'er vales of tilth to mountains
barren,
And faintly sees against the western sky
The far, dark brows of Arran,—

There first I heard his voice, 'mid moorsides lone,
And last in haunts of the soft southland weather,
Where daily your fair children and my own
Played on your lawns together.

His ageless eyes burned with unsquandered power ;
His countenance, when that magic smile came o'er it,
Was like a sea-crag breaking imto flower
Though all the tempests gore it.

Famed, reverenced, hated : with scant riches, save
A purer wealth than heaped and warded treasure ;
The great and noble friendship that you gave
In no begrudging measure ;—

Such did I see him, such did he stand forth,
Catching the light of your own gentler presence,
On those grave uplands of the stormy North,
Or 'mid your southern pleasance.

And I behold him still—though but in dream :
Fighting the thunderous battle his fate denied him :
Fighting for England her dread fight supreme,
With Nelson's soul beside him.

TO INDIA'S GUEST*

YOUNG Heir to an old, old throne ! Your wandering prow,
'Neath many a wandering star,
Hath carried you erenow
Far westward, southward far ;
And far into the hearts of men beside
Have been those voyagings wide.
At last, far eastward faring, you behold,
Under a heaven of vehement breath and hue,
Whose Day is fire of fire and gold of gold,
The home of all things ancient, all things new :
Great India, where, by mart and wharf and street,
By mosque or shrine, or mighty stream that pours
Its sacred waters between sacred shores,
Europe's and Asia's dreams so strangely meet ;
And where the never-mingling faiths, that make
In unlike temples an unchanged abode,
Show by what differing cups do mortals slake
The same deep thirst for God.

Guest of this ocean-seated, mountain-crowned
Mother of half Earth's tongues : on plain and hill,
Within her vast sea-bound,
So many are the peoples that did found
Famed cities, and so many and renowned
Are the proud princedoms, their inheritors still
Wearing magnificent vesture starred and pearlyed,
That as you tread this million-memoried ground
'Tis not a land salutes you but a world !—

* Published in India during the visit of the Prince of Wales.

A world mysterious, bafflingly involved,
Multiplex, full of labyrinths obscure,
Full of enigmas not so wholly solved
As to be shorn of puissance to allure,
Yet from its clostral bosom greeting now
You of the frank and the transparent brow,
You of the countenance like an open book,
Wherein, how curiously soe'er we look,
Nought may we read but things seemly and pure :
Kindliness, courtesy, honour and truth : the things
That, more than purple, adorn the sons of Kings,
And, more than arms, empower a throne to endure.

Ah, Heaven be thanked that suchlike things as these
Are the unponderous, the unmassive keys
That ope great doors with a most golden ease !
And the great doors of India's soul, that are
Closed to mere Might as with a mystic bar,
If Charm draw nigh seem left at least ajar.
Within, what is't we see ?
Moods and emotions evermore apart
From all the way and wont o' the western heart !
And as we look on deeps we have never spanned,
There comes the thought—Perhaps 'twere well if we
Loved less to overawe than to understand :
To have true sight and very touch at last
Of this that far in an unfathomed Past
Rose and had Dayspring for its ancestry,
This Soul of the East, majestic, grave, sedate,
Grandiose of mien : a Spirit from ours aloof,
Yet ravelled up for ever with the woof
Of all our wondrous fate.

ON THE AUTHOR'S FIFTY-FIFTH BIRTHDAY*

(1913)

FOR three things give I thanks this August morn.
Deep thanks, that there hath been vouchsafed
to me
A perfect spouse, pure as the perfect sea.
Deep thanks, that unto me of late was born
A daughter who, though perilously torn
Out of her mother's woeful agony,
Is joyous as the flowers that fill with glee
Her eyes, or as yon laughing fields of corn.
Deep, deepest thanks, that I have now regained
That faith in God which I did lose so long :
The God who oft-times with bewildering gloom
Muffled His beams : who darkly hath sustained
And guided, when I knew not : and from whom
I had at birth His heavenly gift of song.

* Hitherto published in America only.

EPIGRAMS*

THOMAS HOOD

HE saw wan Woman toil with famished eyes ;
He saw her bound, and strove to sing her free.
He saw her fall'n ; and wrote "The Bridge of
Sighs" ;
And on it crossed to immortality.

ON MILTON'S USE OF THE SONNET

A HUNDRED Poets bend proud necks to bear
This yoke, this bondage. He alone could don
The badges of his thraldom with the air
Of one who puts a King's regalia on.

DOMINION

IMPERIAL Power, that hungerest for the globe,
Restrain thy conquering feet,
Lest the same fates that spun thy purple robe
Should weave thy winding-sheet.

* As stated already (see Prefatory Note), these are not part of, but supplementary to, the "hundred poems."

BLESSEDNESS

'Tis human fortune's happiest height, to be
A spirit melodious, lucid, poised, and whole ;
Second in order of felicity,
To walk with such a soul.

ON THE CONCLUSION OF A WAR

THE lyre, 'tis said, in ages long ago,
Sprang from the tense string of the warrior's bow.
If Music thus was born of hate and pain,
O Soul of Man, so be she born again !

TO CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

Two songstresses have sung beneath the sun
As goldenly as thou dost—but not three !
Of those sweet twain the grass is green o'er one :
And blue above the other is the sea.

SCULPTURE AND SONG

THE statue—Buonarroti said—doth wait,
Thrall'd in the block, for me to liberate.
The poem—saith the poet—wanders free
Till I betray it to captivity.

THE NOBLE ANGUISH

To keep in sight Perfection, and adore
Her beauty, is the artist's best delight ;
His bitterest torture, that he can no more
Than keep her long'd-for loveliness in sight.

THE WINGS OF EROS

LOVE, like a bird, hath perched upon a spray
For thee and me to harken what he sings.
Contented, he forgets to fly away ;
But hush ! . . . remind not Eros of his wings.

THE FATAL SCRUTINY

THE beasts in field are glad, and have not wit
To know why leapt their hearts when springtime shone.
Man looks at his own bliss, considers it,
Weighs it, with curious nicety ; and 'tis gone.

TO —————

FORGET not, brother singer ! that though Prose
Can never be too truthful or too wise,
Song is not Truth, not Wisdom, but the rose
Upon Truth's lips, the light in Wisdom's eyes.

AFTER READING "TAMBURLAINE THE GREAT"*

YOUR Marlowe's page I close, my Shakespeare's ope.
How welcome—after gong and cymbal's din—
The continuity, the long slow slope
And vast curves of the gradual violin !

SHELLEY AND HARRIET

A STAR looked down from heaven and loved a flower
Grown in Earth's garden—loved it for an hour.
Let eyes that trace his orbit in the Spheres
Refuse not, to a ruin'd rosebud, tears.

KEATS

HE dwelt with the bright gods of elder time,
On earth and in their cloudy haunts above.
He loved them : and in recompense sublime,
The gods, alas ! gave him their fatal love.

TO A BERKELEIAN IDEALIST

IF Nature be a phantasm, as thou say'st,
A mighty figment and prodigious dream,
To reach the real and true I'll make no haste,
More than content with worlds that only seem.

* No disparagement of the superb genius of Marlowe is intended in this comment on his crudest production.

THE CHURCH TO-DAY

OUTWARDLY splendid as of old—
Inwardly sparkless, void and cold—
Her force and fire all spent and gone—
Like the dead moon, she still shines on.

BYRON THE VOLUPTUARY

Too avid of earth's bliss, he was of those
Whom Delight flies because they give her chase.
Only the odour of her wild hair blows
Back in their faces hungering for her face.

TO A LADY RECOVERED FROM A DANGEROUS SICKNESS

LIFE plucks thee back as by the golden hair—
Life, who had feigned to let thee go but now.
Ah, wealthy is Death already, and can spare
Ev'n such a prey as thou !

ON A PEOPLE'S POET

YES, threadbare seem his songs, to lettered ken.
They were worn threadbare next the hearts of men.

DATE DUE

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